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F9031084

**PROMOTING EQUALITY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION:
PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE IN ONE LOCAL
EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)

Date of submission: 2004

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ABSTRACT

This study considers, from the perspective of the Local Education Authority Officers working there, how one English Shire County, 'Trentshire', promotes equality in its primary education service. Set in the wake of the Macpherson Report, it investigates the pressures for local government of implementing a social justice agenda alongside other initiatives in an existing framework of neo-liberal legislation promoting effectiveness, 'performativity' and school improvement. It is not concerned with pedagogic practice, but considers how LEA administrators promote equality and diversity while working in a context where LEAs have lost most of their former power but are still expected to take a leadership role, where relationships with school Heads and governors are frequently uneasy and where parents increasingly insist on their individual 'rights'. A 'Trentshire' LEA Officer myself, I argue that, although the power of LEAs in relation to schools has diminished, individual officers retain a key role in promoting equality.

I research from the 'inside', and adopt a critical theory perspective shaped by my personal desire for a just society free from inequalities of race, gender or disability. Arguing that policy implementation is complex, messy and dynamic, involving social action by real people, I reject a positivist strategy based on quantitative outcomes analysis, claiming that insight into the views and behaviours of key players is a stronger basis for researching policy. My principal evidence comes from interviews with colleague LEA Officers whose day-to-day role brings them into contact with schools and parents, and I also use evidence from meeting notes to critically consider the actions taken by 'Trentshire' Officers in three separate scenarios.

My findings reveal 'Trentshire' Officers' personal commitment and their pragmatic determination to solve dilemmas and make policies 'work' in spite of political and structural tensions inherent in their roles and the conceptual tensions within the equality and diversity agendas; they are required to uphold weak 'equal treatment' procedures grounded in neo-liberal legislation whilst increasingly delivering a social inclusion / diversity agenda based on postmodern conceptions of difference. They use their discretion to develop working definitions of equality and to adopt their own *ad hoc* 'first-order' strategies for change, and as the LEA's role extends into partnership with public sector and voluntary agencies, have a wider opportunity to contribute positively to the promotion of social justice. My study concludes with brief thoughts on building strategies to make equality a reality in 'Trentshire'.

PART I: INTRODUCTION**Chapter 1 SETTING THE SCENE**

“He who administers, governs, because he infixes his own mark and stamps his own character on all public affairs as they pass through his hands.” (unsourced comment by Matthew Arnold HMI, cited by Ozga, 2000, p.122)

This study is an investigation into the role of the educational administrator in the implementation of equality policy. I must at the outset declare my own interest and involvement since I am myself a Local Education Authority Officer and am using my own authority, ‘Trentshire’ - a relatively prosperous, predominantly rural English Shire County with a chiefly white middle class population - as a case study to explore the role of LEA Officers in the policy processes.

As an educational administrator I find the Matthew Arnold quotation intriguing since, in spite of key changes and reforms in the intervening hundred and forty or so years, there are elements with which I can identify. There are also differences. Arnold paints a picture of a powerful bureaucrat who shapes and directs public affairs, but the current LEA administrator role seems at times to be characterised by impotence, with lack of respect from the public and a loss of power in relation to schools following changes in national educational policy – LEAs have diminished responsibility to influence practice even in areas where they remain publicly accountable. Arnold’s administrator is male, but in ‘Trentshire’ LEA¹ a majority of administrators – the officers who carry out tasks - are women, although the more powerful roles of policy makers (the County Councillors) and strategists (the Director and his Assistants) are

¹ ‘Trentshire’ LEA is the Education Department of ‘Trentshire’ County Council

predominantly male. I am drawn to Arnold's comment, and particularly to his concept of the individual infixing his own mark and stamping his own character, as I believe that individual LEA Officers still have the ability to influence and to make a difference in policy implementation.

This is my central thesis: that, although the power of LEAs in relation to schools has diminished, individual officers retain a key role in promoting equality policy and in working with individual pupils and parents to combat inequality. The balance between the individual and the collective is one of the threads which runs through my study, as is the argument that policy implementation is a social process, complex and messy rather than rational and linear, and involving real people and real dilemmas.

A further key strand concerns approaches to promoting equality and combating inequalities in education, which I explore in Part IV. I must here declare my personal commitment to equality and social justice, grounded in my feminist beliefs, disability and teaching experience in an inner-city multiracial school – and if my value stance has been shaped by my life 'history', then that is also likely to be the case for my colleague LEA Officers. Their own personal perspectives and experiences of inequality and injustice must become part of the individual character which they stamp on policies as they pass through their hands, but in doing so are they helping or hindering the implementation of 'Trentshire' equality policy?

This study investigates what the promotion of equality policy means within the local context of a particular LEA, by using the perspective of the LEA administrators themselves – their perceptions of equality and diversity, and their understanding of their own role and their ability to influence and change equality practices. I consider it offers a unique picture of the role played by Officers in one LEA and the dilemmas they face in their day-to-day interactions with schools and

service users, and thus makes an original contribution to research on equality practices in education.

Focus and rationale

My study began in 1999, at a time when 'Trentshire's' longstanding equality policies came under renewed focus, principally the County's Corporate Statement [Appendix 1] and the 'Trentshire' Education Service equality policy, "Equality in Education" [Appendix 2], both of which cover the Council's dual role as service provider and employer and affirm commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all people in 'Trentshire'. The concept of *promotion* is critical, since, although the LEA retains overall accountability, 'Trentshire' has for many years devolved responsibility for policy delivery to its schools.

The renewed focus in 1999 resulted from three separate initiatives, two of which impacted on County Council responsibilities and one directly on schools. Firstly, 'Trentshire' County Council, like other public bodies, was required to draw up a response to the Macpherson Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence (Local Government Association, 1999), and secondly, it acquired a statutory obligation to develop an action plan for monitoring and achieving its racial equality policy, following the Commission for Racial Equality's Standards for Local Government (CRE, 1995) and in accordance with the Best Value performance indicators for corporate health (DETR, 1999, p.24). Third, the then Department for Education and Employment issued Circular 10/99 to all schools in July 1999, requiring them to demonstrate 'commitment to equal opportunities' as an example of good practice. This statutory guidance states that:

"Parents and pupils should know that the school has an equal opportunities policy and is committed to equality of opportunity for all pupils. Schools should monitor the impact of their policies and procedures

on different groups (by race, gender and disability).”
(DfEE, 1999a, paragraph 2.1)

During the four-year span of the study the statutory requirement for LEAs to have regard for equality in the delivery of their services has been further strengthened through the introduction of the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act, the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) and the generic Equality Standard for Local Government (Employers’ Organisation for Local Government, 2001). Together these have prompted ‘Trentshire’ County Council to look closely at the equality implications of its dual role as service provider and employer, and in 2001 it used the statutory Best Value Review process to formally scrutinise its performance on equal opportunities, focusing on issues related to community consultation and employment across the whole County Council. The impact of this Review has been significant for ‘Trentshire’, prompting a changed policy emphasis announced by the Chief Executive of ‘Trentshire’ in the monthly staff newsletter:

“Equity is one of the Council’s key core values and I
.....want us to move away from thinking about *equal opportunities* and start talking about *diversity*.” (Chief Executive of ‘Trentshire’, January 2002, my italics).

‘Trentshire’ County Council makes frequent use of the strapline “Making equality a reality”, and my study attempts to unpick what this means to Officers as key players. Policy evaluation in ‘Trentshire’ usually centres on outcomes, judging the effect of policies through monitoring quantifiable performance indicators – the Best Value Review of equality exemplifies this approach - but I want to focus on the processes, explore the issues and tensions encountered by LEA Officers in policy implementation, and, through interviews with colleague Officers, give voice to those grappling with the challenges and dilemmas of trying to make equality a reality in ‘Trentshire’ primary education service.

I am interested how LEA Officers managing and administering areas such as school admissions, exclusions, special educational needs, personnel and resources perceive their own role in the implementation of 'Trentshire's' equality policies. I exclude issues relating to pedagogic practices and have chosen to limit the scope to primary education, partly to make the research project more manageable, and partly because of claims from literature that good equality practices are particularly important with young children (Malik, 1998, p.2).

Central to my study are a set of related questions about perceptions of objective, role and process. Firstly, what do LEA Officers perceive to be the nature of their task in relation to the implementation of equality and diversity policies? What do they see as the aims of the policies, and how do they interpret them in the context of their work with schools and the community? Secondly, how do they perceive their individual role in the policy process? How do they understand their own role as LEA Officers and their working relationships with 'Trentshire' primary schools and the local community? Thirdly, what strategies do they use to promote equality policies? How do they ensure that schools properly understand and implement the policies, and how do they meet the various challenges and cope with the tensions and dilemmas that they face in their day-to-day work?

In Part II I shall explain my strategy for researching these questions, and Parts III and IV will then explore issues in recent literature relating to the role of LEAs and equality and diversity policies in education. Part V will focus on my 'Trentshire' investigation, and will offer a consideration of my findings.

PART II: RESEARCHING 'TRENTSHIRE'

“Rather than struggling to fit into a particular category, your efforts would be better spent in making your aims, assumptions, politics and ethics clear and justifiable” (Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002, p.148).

The argument here is for the researcher to consider how she is positioned within her research rather than adopting a particular tradition *per se*, and then to be transparent and explicit about her thinking and the values underpinning her strategy and methodology. I am attracted to this advice and Part II details my attempts to follow it; in Chapter 2 I give a rationale for my research strategy; in Chapter 3 I explore the politics and ethics associated with my role as an ‘insider-reformer’ and in Chapter 4 I outline the methods and instruments used to collect and interpret my evidence.

Chapter 2 STRATEGY AND METHODOLOGY

Placing the strategy

In this Chapter I explain the thinking behind my research strategy and why I describe it as within the critical theory tradition, informed by my personal feminist perspective. My starting point was to reject a positivist approach as contrary to my own view of knowledge and conception of what the world is like, as I do not believe that the rational cause-and-effect methods of the natural sciences are transferable to researching social sciences. Positivism contains several strands, but essentially argues that scientific knowledge can specify true connections between ideas and reality, and that reality is accessible only through the correct production of facts and the control of subjectivity (Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002, p.173).

I judge the positivist method of policy evaluation through testing outcomes against objectives to be too simplistic for researching the dynamic complexities of equality policy, and unlikely to reveal insights into behavioural and cultural effects - though had I chosen to focus on a quantitative analysis of disparities there may have been an argument for adopting positivist elements, particularly since there is a strong local government tradition for input-outcome, cause-and-effect studies. My study acknowledges the prevalence of quantitative outcome measures in the current 'performativity' climate, but uses them for their potential value in informing change, not in statistical hypothesis testing.

I can therefore reject positivism on philosophical grounds – an act which Jayaratne and Stewart cite as specifically feminist (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1995, p.220). I can identify with this, since my view of the world is shaped by my desire for a fair and just society, confident in its diversity and free from inequalities resulting from gender, ethnicity or disability. I would describe myself as feminist, but does this mean that any research I do automatically becomes 'feminist'? And is a specifically feminist strategy appropriate to my study which has a wider, social justice focus?

The literature suggests that what makes research 'feminist' is complex, defined by theoretical ontological and epistemological perspectives, not by the gender of the researcher or the adoption of particular methodological techniques, such as interviews or histories. For instance, Kelly et al. argue that:

"It is epistemology which defines what counts as valid knowledge and why. If we begin from this position then it is possible to bring a feminist standpoint to a range of methods" (Kelly et al., 1995, p.246).

Several authors offer characteristics of feminist research. Jayaratne and Stewart give nine: the potential of the research to help women's

lives; the use of methods appropriate to both question and audience; awareness of problems of both qualitative and quantitative methods, and the use of both if possible; the use of bias-free or sex-fair procedures; making time and effort to do quality research; interpretation in sympathy with change in women's lives; attempting some political analysis of the findings; active participation in the dissemination of research results (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1995, pp.230 - 232). Reinharz lists eighteen 'alternative/feminist' points of difference to 'conventional/patriarchal research' covering: focus, data type and analysis, topic, role, validity criteria, research objectives, values, presentation format and role of reader (Reinharz, 1983 pp.170-2).

However I have not found these lists in their entirety particularly helpful in my thinking. Whilst research which is feminist might display these characteristics, I struggle to accept the corollary that research displaying these characteristics is feminist - indeed, I feel many of the characteristics cited by Reinharz as 'alternative/feminist' could broadly apply to any social science qualitative researcher. Jayaratne and Stewart, whilst also offering many general points of good practice for qualitative researchers, include some which I do regard as 'feminist', arguing for a focus on research which 'has potential to help women's lives' (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1995, p.230) and for a political analysis of findings (ibid, p.232).

I conclude from the literature that the key elements of feminist research involve challenge to women's unequal social position – Ozga defines the feminist perspective as demanding an orientation to research that seeks to challenge patriarchal assumptions and explanations (Ozga, 2000, p.83). Lather adds a second key element – putting social construction of gender at the centre of one's enquiry (Lather, 1995, p.294) and Ramazanoğlu and Holland pull together the strands, defining feminist approaches to research as:

“identified largely by their theories of gender and power, their normative frameworks and their notions of transformation and accountability.” (Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002, p.147)

Although personally I subscribing to these views, I feel they would exclude my own study which is not specifically concerned with the oppression of women or the social construction of gender – though I can identify with the assertion by David et al. that:

“Feminist approaches, in our view, are both analytical and strategic – concerned with social justice, social change and reflexivity.” (David et al., 2000, p.28)

I return to the comment by Kelly et al. quoted above, on the role of epistemology in defining research and thus the relevance of feminist standpoint. This takes the position that women’s exclusion from power is a research advantage because women are consequently able to operate from the informed position of scholarship and from the oppressed standpoint of women (Ozga, 2000, p.84). My research is not specifically focused on gender, but I am using my perspective as a disabled woman LEA Officer to explore conceptions of combating social injustice in ‘Trentshire’ – my personal views are a research advantage, but I am not claiming that this is specifically ‘feminist’ research, rather I am adopting the approach Acker describes as ‘covert’, as work which is informed at any point by a feminist framework (Acker, 1994, p.55).

I also relate to the **critical theory** tradition of research, and it is evident from literature that there is close alignment between this and feminist research (Ozga, 2000, p.83; Scott, 2000, p.54). This tradition offers a perspective on the social world, together with an indication on how it can be improved, and is described by Scott as committed to making a contribution to practice and to promoting change, in particular to identify and unmask those human beliefs and practices which limit freedom, justice and democracy (Scott, 2000,

p.54). The emphasis here is on critical reflection, on not taking institutions and social and power relations for granted but calling them into question by investigating their origins, processes and potential for change (Ozga, 2000, p.45), and Ozga argues that working within a critical frame places requirements on the researcher to assess research activity in relation to social justice concerns (ibid, p.46). Gitlin et al. argue that the researcher must take an openly political stance and push for issues of social justice and equality (Gitlin et. al, 1993, p.204), but I cannot entirely identify with this in spite of my role as an 'insider-reformer' – an issue which I explore later in this chapter. I am not seeking to intervene into the action – my aim is to investigate the policy implementation process and this is not 'action research'. I can better identify with Scott's conception of the critical researcher's role as 'promoting change' and 'to identify and unmask' (Scott, 2000, p.55).

Researching policy

I turn next to discussion of my research subject, and place this within my strategic thinking. My study is essentially policy research, focusing principally on processes of implementation and change, but I am not looking at policy-making – it is not research *for* policy but research *of* policy and how it is put into practice. Let me make it clear that the conception of policy in this research study is akin to that which Ball describes as 'policy as text' (Ball, 1994, p.16); my interest is in how equality policies are read and acted upon by administrators, and how they are affected by and affect the social context. Ball makes a distinction between studies of 'policy as text' and 'policy as discourse', which he conceptualises as the way in which policies exercise power through a production of 'truth' and 'knowledge' as discourses (ibid, p.21). Ozga rejects this dichotomy, arguing instead that the two strands are relational and that it is unnecessary to conceptualise differently (Ozga, 2000, p.94) and I tend to agree with

her. But my key point is that this research study is focused on the element of policy that:

“can be worked on, interpreted and contextualised, and stands in contradiction to assumptions that policy works in a straightline from formulation to implementation.” (Ozga, 2000, p.94)

In other words I view policy as a process rather than a product, which in Ozga's categorisation based on work by Dale (Ozga, 2000, p.40; Dale, 1986, pp.56-61), places my research as social science project rather than social administration or policy analysis - she claims that it is possible to argue from a critical social science perspective that the issue of equality and its enhancement or reduction through education remains the key topic for research (Ozga, 2000, p.96). Leaving aside the social administration project as relating largely to pre-1970s research to improve practices in the welfare state, Ozga acknowledges a continuum between social science project and policy analysis, but notes that policy analysis is more strongly orientated towards finding solutions than enhancing understanding, focusing on ways of ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of policies whilst social science looks for a better understanding of how things work.

The distinction between policy research which is about policy and that which is actually about practice is one of the key distinctions identified by Ball in his analysis of education policy research. He offers a template of binaries to help position policy research in the current variety of stances, styles and preoccupations reflecting different traditions and practices (Ball, 1997, p.264); between conceptions of policy which treat policies as clear, abstract and fixed against those in which policies are awkward, incomplete, incoherent and unstable (ibid, p.265); between research located at a single level of analysis, such as an LEA, and that attempting to capture the dynamics between levels (ibid, p.266); between that locating policies in a historical context, and that which does not (ibid, p.266); between that

located in a specified place and that which fails to convey a sense of community or setting (ibid, p.267). Ball's final set of binaries concern the placing of people within the research; he criticises research which sees policy as something that is 'done' to people, or in which both the people who 'do' policy and those who confront it are absent or invisible, and argues the importance of 'peopling' policy research with those who display the complexities, contradictions and paradoxes that 'you and I demonstrate in the face of change' (ibid, p.270).

I found this helpful in positioning my own study and thesis that policies involve social action by real people, and that policy implementation is complex and messy, affected by changes in both time and place, and agree David's view that it sits within my broadly feminist perspective:

"A feminist perspective would want to investigate the policies, processes of policy-making and implementation around equal opportunities in order to promote change" (David et al., 2000, p.32).

Method and methodology

As a detailed investigation of a specific instance, 'Trentshire' LEA, my study uses **case study method** to develop an understanding of the players and processes involved in promoting equality policies in primary education; to consider meanings and interactions, particularly to generate insights. Key elements of the case study method, according to Cohen et al.'s handbook of education research methods, are its emphasis on the illustrative, interpretative and subjective to explore the detailed relationship of events within a particular context defined by characteristics of place, time, function, and organisation to provide a 'unique example of real people in real situations' (Cohen et al., 2000, p.181). I can identify within this an inherent tension between *descriptive illustration* and *interpretation* – should events be left to speak for themselves, or interpreted, evaluated and explained?

My personal view inclines towards interpretation, but through an inductive approach using the evidence itself to develop meaning and understanding, and contains elements of ethnographic case study, using participant observation to uncover processes of social action and the perceptions of LEA Officers as key players. It also contains elements of **evaluation**, which I regard as a process that, like both a mirror and a window, reflects on past practice and informs future action (Stronach, 1987, p.210); a view grounded in the illuminative concept of evaluation which aims to discover and document what it is like to participate in a specific programme and to discern and discuss its most significant features and critical processes (Parlett and Hamilton, 1987, p.60). I am also influenced by elements of Troyna's 'hands up' committed approach to evaluation research and by his critical social research stance of promoting change through challenge (Stronach and Torrance, 1995, p.284).

Case study research has often been criticised because its findings are not generalisable, especially in comparison with those of statistical survey research (Gomm et al., 2000, p.98). I am not intending to generate theories, but I should like to be able to establish the value of my study by claiming relevance for its conclusions beyond 'Trentshire' and would claim that my findings are translatable to other comparable sites, namely other English LEAs. Gomm et al. also comment on generalisation within the case study site, and warn against drawing wider, and possibly, erroneous inferences from evidence taken only from a particular point in time, or from a small group of people (ibid, p.110) so I must take care to make these details explicit.

A key element of my research strategy is to give voice to 'Trentshire' LEA Officers' understanding of equality and to gain insight into how they respond to the dilemmas and challenges presented by its promotion. I consider qualitative evidence best provides this insight,

as **qualitative research methodologies** reflect the theoretical aim of the phenomenologists and other 'anti-positivist' social scientists to try to understand how individuals make sense of their world. The qualitative researcher looks for evidence that will help to interpret social action, seeking meanings and motives and, through constantly shaping and reshaping the research process as patterns emerge, has a direct involvement in events. There is a tradition of using qualitative methodologies for research studies in the equality field - feminist researchers have frequently advocated qualitative methods, arguing that individual women's understandings, emotions and actions in the world must be explored in their own terms (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1995, p.217). My research strategy applies this conception to LEA Officers, exploring and articulating issues in their world – and mine.

But is there a place for quantitative methodology in my study? It is generally associated with a positivist stance, which I have rejected; and feminist, anti-racist and Marxist researchers have in the past been particularly critical of quantitative methods, arguing that the concept of objective, value free social science legitimises the dominance of a white, middle-class male society (Atkinson et al., 1993, p.25; Mies, 1993, p.66). I cannot entirely reject quantitative evidence since the use of quantitative indicators is important to the work of LEA Officers, but I use it as secondary evidence, reflecting the available management information, and not in the positivist sense of testing a hypothesis. To reveal how 'Trentshire' Officers see their role, I intend to describe the view of 'Trentshire' available through the LEA's windows, and I shall do this in Chapter 10.

In my next two chapters in this Section I move on to consider how I shall make my aims, assumptions, politics and ethics clear and justifiable.

Chapter 3 MY ROLE AS RESEARCHER

As a 'Trentshire' LEA Officer myself, my role in this research study is that of an 'insider-researcher', a duality that is not necessarily a problem but which must be acknowledged. It brings both benefits and dilemmas. Benefits, through the advantage of being 'on-the-spot' and aware of likely issues; through familiarity with interview subjects who are consequently open and interested participants; through easy access to data, including evidence which might be inaccessible to outside researchers. Dilemmas, in the ethical use of evidence collected outside the interview situation, in meetings or conversations and in defining the parameters of my own involvement - do I play an active part in the study, or stand aside as an observer? Does my involvement cease to matter if I declare it as 'author present' research, or do I need to guard against it affecting my ability to critically observe? This is a problem familiar to ethnographic and qualitative researchers, who have written of the need to 'simultaneously know a setting and to make it unfamiliar' (Measor and Woods, 1991, p.69) and to defend the double-agent role (Stronach, 1987, p.208).

If I am to defend this role, I must explore what it is and what implications it has for my research. My involvement becomes a major contribution in shaping the study since, as Ball points out, my findings are a product of both my skills and imagination as the researcher and of the interface between myself as researcher and the research (Ball, 1993, p.45). My own gender, disability and teaching background in an inner-city multicultural school mean that I bring my own experiences to the research, together with my own preconceptions of the role played by LEA Officers, and I need to explore whether these present a strength or a weakness.

My starting point in this exploration was to distinguish between, and place myself within, the various terms used in the literature: 'insider-researcher', 'practitioner-researcher', 'participant-researcher', 'insider-reformer'. The term 'insider-researcher' is used by Black-Hawkins to describe her role in researching the processes of inclusion and exclusion in schools (Black-Hawkins, 1999, p.8), but her situation does not match my own or lead me to identify with her interpretation. She is an educational researcher who deliberately sought employment in a school in order to increase her involvement and 'reduce the metaphorical distance' between herself as researcher and members of the school. This is essentially different from working in a school and choosing to engage in a research project, and is perhaps more accurately described as 'participant-observer', an ethnographical term which Ball defines as the engagement of the researcher in the world under study (Ball, 1993, p.32).

The term 'practitioner-researcher' appears frequently in literature as implicitly 'teacher-researcher', or more specifically 'classroom-teacher-researcher', and thus seems inappropriate to my administrator role. Weiner, in her critique of the teacher-researcher movement, notes a clear distinction between teachers whose research focuses on professional development and improved classroom practice and those with a wider social agenda, such as gender inequality (Weiner, 1989, quoted in E835 Offprints Reader, 1996). The role of the latter, she claims, is to illuminate and make visible, and she suggests that 'insider-reformer' might be a more accurate term. I can relate to this conception - it reflects my previous noted emphases on *promoting* change (David et al., 2000, p.32; Scott, 2000, p.54; Stronach and Torrance, 1995, p.284) and matches my own perspective of my role in the study.

My intention as an 'insider-reformer' is to be a change-agent for improving equality practices in 'Trentshire'. Though ideally I want to do this through *using* the research findings, not by *influencing* them,

my dilemma is that my participant role makes it almost impossible to separate the two. Qualitative research is a social construct, 'a cunning simulation of nature' (Stenhouse, 1987, p.75), and as researcher I am a key shaper of this simulation process; unlike a positivist researcher I am not seeking an objective and external stance free from bias. But how best to solve this dilemma? I could be explicit about my presence in the research, though I agree with Gitlin et al. that an 'author-present' paragraph in the report is too simplistic a solution (Gitlin et al., 1993, p.202), or I could write my report in the first person (Ball, 1993, p.46), which I feel could dominate the other voices.

The concept of reflexivity is useful here, meaning a critical consideration of how I as researcher am socially situated with regard to the research agenda and process. Ball defines reflexivity as the rigour obtained through the conscious and deliberate linking of the social process of engagement in the field with the technical processes of data collection and the decisions that linking involves (Ball, 1993, p.33), arguing that this reflexive process must be present at all stages of the research project. A reflexive approach means reflecting critically on the consequences of my presence in the research process through awareness of, and appropriate responses to, the power relationships between researcher and researched (Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002, p.158); so, for example, I must consider whether my interview subjects are telling me what I wanted to hear, and whether the evidence can be separated from my involvement as researcher. This is also an issue of reliability, and begs the question whether another researcher would have elicited different interview responses. The answer must be yes, but I consider that this subjectivity does not make the evidence unreliable – it just provides a different set of insights.

There are also issues of validity to be considered. Woodrow appears to claim that these are different for 'practitioner-researchers' than for

academic or contract researchers, arguing that, for practitioners, a cogent and persuasive argument is more crucial than validity in the research process and that what matters is whether professional colleagues recognise the significance and agree to identify with the outcomes (Woodrow, 2000, p.2). I am not sure that I agree with this – though I would make a distinction between social and scientific researchers in their perception of validity. Social researchers would argue that there can never be one enduring truth about the nature of social reality that is independent of how knowledge of it is produced, since making knowledge claims is a social and political process dependent on its conditions of production (Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002, p.57).

Evidence from literature suggests that many researchers consider the benefits of being an ‘insider-researcher’ to outweigh the disadvantages, and I am encouraged by Black-Hawkins’ endorsement of Walker’s assertion that, given the choice between data collected from strangers and that from close contact over long periods of time, he prefers the latter because they seemingly offer promise of insight and understanding (Walker, 1991, p.99, quoted in Black-Hawkins, 1999, p.9). Hammersley acknowledges that practitioners can offer deeper understanding of inside behaviour and mores, long-term experience of contextual history and relationships, and are better placed to test out ideas, (Hammersley, 1993, p.217), but also produces counter-claims: practitioners may be too close to the research and blind to their own intentions, or have a distorted understanding gained from too narrow a context. He rejects the claim that only those actually involved in a social situation can truly understand it and concludes that there are no overwhelming advantages to being an insider or outsider (Hammersley, 1993, p.219). My claim is not that my insider position gives me ‘exclusive rights’ to researching LEA Officers, but that it gives particular understanding of the behaviours I am researching. An external

researcher might uncover different insights – equally valid, but different.

Ethics and negotiation

Key ethical issues in my research study concern access, confidentiality and the publication of the research study, and in each I assumed that my 'insider-researcher' status was not an entitlement to ignore basic protocols. Before submitting the original research proposal I made a formal written request to 'Trentshire's' Director of Education for permission to carry out the study, and received written agreement. I also discussed my proposals with the Senior Officers responsible for equality issues in 'Trentshire' LEA, to ensure that they were aware of, and comfortable with, my plans. All were supportive - the only proviso was that I should not make demands on schools since 'Trentshire' has a rigorously enforced requirement to reduce the 'bureaucratic burden' on schools (DfEE, 1998).

As an employee I am contractually bound to observe codes of practice on personal information and information security, and made the decision to give the LEA a fictitious name, chiefly to protect the anonymity of my interview subjects. Much of the work of 'Trentshire' County Council is already available for public scrutiny, including many of the meeting papers and performance indicators I use as secondary evidence, but given the nature of my study, with its focus on personal perceptions, I wanted to protect the identity of individual participants. However, in respecting the confidentiality of key players I encountered a dilemma over referencing my study - accurate referencing is a prerequisite for research reports, but it makes nonsense of anonymisation if I acknowledge the actual name in references. There were two possible alternatives – to omit the references, or to replace the actual name with 'Trentshire'; I have opted for the former.

All the interview subjects were given written assurance that their comments were confidential [Appendix 4], and assured that all references within my dissertation would be anonymised. This presents a dilemma. The reader's understanding of Officers' individual perspectives would be considerably enhanced by the inclusion of short biographical details on each, but this would almost certainly enable any reader familiar with 'Trentshire' to identify the subjects, and thus represent a breach of my promise of confidentiality. I have placed these biographies in Appendix 3, but would remove this for any internal circulation in 'Trentshire', where personal references will be kept to a minimum. Should I wish to publish the research beyond this dissertation I would need to renegotiate with my subjects.

Chapter 4 STRATEGY INTO PRACTICE: METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

Collecting the evidence

My primary source of evidence is a series of thirteen interviews with 'Trentshire' LEA Officers. I use interviews as my principal research instrument to give voice to those grappling with the challenges and dilemmas of promoting effective equality policy implementation in 'Trentshire'; I am looking for perceptions rather than correspondence with the empirical world, so did not use a statistically balanced representative sample, but nevertheless tried to avoid bias or limit internal generalisation by interviewing a comparatively large number of Officers with a range of roles. I used my insider knowledge to select a group from those whose role requires engagement with primary schools or parents on issues with an equality perspective, thus ensuring that those I interviewed were key players in the events I investigated; none declined the invitation for interview.

The interview subjects represent a cross-section of LEA third-tier officers holding a similar managerial status to my own. The gender, age and ethnic profile of those interviewed broadly reflects that of 'Trentshire' Education Officers – eleven female, two male, mostly in their forties and fifties, all white (short biographies of the interview subjects are given in Appendix 3). All except three of the interviews took place over a three-month period during Summer 2001; partly as a practical response to availability, but giving the advantage that the viewpoints all relate to a similar snapshot in time – which I considered important in a context of rapid change, although mindful of Gomm's claim that this might limit internal generalisation (Gomm et al., 2000, p.110). Two were carried out as part of the pilot study, and one in early spring 2002 – the last delayed because Advisor C, a seconded primary head, was not previously available.

My original plan was to conduct largely unstructured interviews, following the 'interview as social event' model (Holland and Ramazanoğlu, 1995, p.279), and I trialled this with two officers as a pilot. I felt that as a familiar colleague anything other than a normal conversation would be stilted and possibly counter-productive, but experience gained from the pilot confirmed the value of introducing a broad framework. I therefore moved to semi-structured interviews, based on the four key areas identified by Young's research on equal opportunities in local government, which I felt offered a comprehensive framework for discussion: perceptions of 'equality'; scope / coverage of equality policies; processes for implementation; and constraints on progress (Young, 1988, p.94). I gave the interview subjects a short list of issues beforehand [Appendix 4] to ensure they understood the focus of the research, while limiting my potential for influencing the pattern of the interview. Most of the interviews lasted about an hour and a half – and, apart from one where the interviewee had to leave at a set time, continued until they reached a natural conclusion. All were conducted in meeting rooms at the 'Trentshire' Education Offices and were taped and transcribed. The transcription proved very time-consuming, but provided me with a real opportunity to become familiar with the contents.

I have supplemented the interview evidence with **secondary material**, relating both to schools, (for example policy documents, quantitative performance data and inspection reports from OfSTED and the Audit Commission), and to the work of 'Trentshire' County Council (for example meeting notes and internal emails), and would claim that this off-sets any limitation to internal generalisation by my 'snapshot' interviews by providing information across the full period of my study. This approach has limitations in that the evidence was originally collected for other purposes and contains gaps, but offered the advantage of constructing the picture generally available to 'Trentshire' Officers. Even the gaps proved useful, indicating the value attached to the data by LEA services responsible for its

collection and use, and thus the relative importance of equality issues to 'Trentshire'. As an Officer I had ready access to this material, but in using it for this study had to ensure that I respected the same confidential codes as observed with my interviews – comments made in meetings or emails are used only by permission of the relevant Officers. In particular I have made extensive use of notes of, firstly, the Departmental Equality Action Group (TEEAG), as they debated the updating of the LEA's equality guidance to schools and how to encourage effective ethnic monitoring practices, and secondly, the Departmental Social Inclusion Team (TESIT). As a member of these groups I have 'double-lens' vision on the action, but regard this as a cause of strength not conflict.

The approach also developed from the knowledge that I would not be given permission to contact schools for my research, and would need to look for opportunities to use evidence collected through the LEA's routine work. One such arose as part 'Trentshire's' response to the Macpherson Report into the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, when the LEA sent a package to schools comprising a leaflet summarising the Macpherson recommendations for education (Local Government Association, 1999); a 'good practice' checklist to prompt schools to think about their own equality policies and a questionnaire, which mirrored the contents of the checklist. Primary schools responded well to the request to provide feedback and 'to help the LEA to further improve support to schools and to target resources effectively', with almost a third returning completed questionnaire forms, and 7% sending copies of their equality policies, and I was able to access these for my study.

Analysis and interpretation

My purpose in analysing the interviews was to understand how those I interviewed perceived the challenges, not just to identify points of commonality, so I used the technique of cognitive mapping

(Jones, S., 1987, p.267) to best manage the complexities of analysing each interview for content and priorities. Cognitive mapping is a method of modelling persons' beliefs in diagrammatic form, to help understand the way in which interviewees make sense of their world by placing meaning in context (ibid, p.276) and thus enabling 'categories to emerge out of examination of the data' without letting firm preconceptions dictate relevances in concepts and hypotheses beforehand (ibid, p.266). Ozga argues against the notion that data should generate 'theory', regarding this as coming close to positivistic assumptions about underlying rules of social organisation waiting to be uncovered (Ozga, 2000, p.94). Her criticism is that it takes the researcher out of the frame – but whilst understanding the logic of her argument I would prefer the inductive approach of letting my interviewees steer my thinking.

With such a large amount of interview evidence, analysis proved an unwieldy process, like 'looking through unfocused conceptual lenses at unstructured chaos in the data' (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1993, p.22) so I developed a computerised solution. Firstly, the interview transcripts were 'cognitively mapped' to analyse the responses by both content and priorities and to identify categories covered; next, I turned the electronic version into a table, adding additional columns to show a code for each interview subject, the sequence order, and the categories covered by the comment. This was easily converted into an electronic spreadsheet which enabled me, through use of sorting facilities, to bring sets of comments together for closer scrutiny and thus to read horizontally across a variety of themes. This proved a helpful and flexible aid to the iterative process of reading, identifying, coding, sorting, re-sorting, re-reading and so on - enabling, to use Henwood and Pidgeon's imagery, the lenses to become more sharply focused (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1993, p.22). I found this more manageable than the traditional process of cutting up transcripts and placing them in envelopes (Ball, 1991, p.183); it simplified the task, but the process of trying to make bits and pieces

of analysis fit into an analytical whole remains 'intellectually challenging and frustrating' (Ball, 1991, p.186).

But for me the most difficult part was the interpretation; the selection of material from the volume of evidence from the thirteen interviews. Once I had selected the 'ideal quote' for a point, I referred back to the context of the interview to check my interpretation was appropriate. The choice of texts within the report is subjective, based on my own perceptions of relevance and coherence induced from the complete set. This is where reflexivity comes in! As Ramazanoğlu and Holland explain:

"At best you can be as aware as possible that interpretation is your exercise of power, that your decisions have consequences, and that you are accountable for your conclusions. Simple decisions over how to categorise, what to include and what to exclude also carry theoretical, political and ethical implications."
(Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002, p.161).

The interviews have been written up as interpreted accounts, using the framework of my research questions to explore how individual Officers perceive the issues and respond to the challenges. In addition I have presented three scenarios – on writing a new equality policy for schools, the promotion of ethnic monitoring and the formulation of strategies to promote social inclusion - in an attempt to understand the processes and dynamics involved in addressing a particular topic.

The **secondary evidence** has been used to produce an equality profile of 'Trentshire', to illustrate the information available to an LEA Officer, and this was compiled from material available on the county's intranet. The questionnaire returns from schools were entered into a computer (using Microsoft Access database package) for analysis;

most of the questions were logical “yes/no” tick boxes, but some were open-ended and entered in full into text fields, which enabled responses to be analysed inductively rather than coded into pre-defined, pre-judged and possibly subjective categories.

Lessons from experience: reshaping during the study

Inevitably my plans changed several times between the initial proposal and final report. Some changes were externally driven – the most significant being the impact of the Macpherson report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence. This was published just before I wrote my research proposal, but I seriously underestimated the effect it would have in requiring a predominantly white council such as ‘Trentshire’ to prioritise issues of ‘race’ and ethnicity. The need to respond to government initiatives on inclusion, disability discrimination and combating social exclusion have similarly altered the local agenda and their combined effect has been to change what I had originally conceived as a gender-oriented study into one with a much wider social justice focus.

My original proposal was for an evaluation, based on outcome measures and triangulated views of schools, to provide credibility within the liberal traditions of my County Council employers; but I eventually realised that this might not actually be useful to them, partly because ‘Trentshire’ already has access to similar style reports from OfSTED and the Audit Commission, but chiefly because it would indicate *what* needs to change without necessarily indicating *how* to make the changes. It seemed my project would be potentially more useful if I investigated Officers’ roles within the implementation process to identify dilemmas, tensions and barriers, and it developed – with the full support of Senior Managers - into a qualitative case study.

This change in direction placed the interviews at the heart of my study. My insider role meant I had no access problems, but was susceptible to requests for postponement of scheduled interviews - not unusual within the normal context of office meetings which are frequently re-arranged in response to some urgent need. More serious delays occurred when the normal office routine was disrupted, firstly by the OfSTED Inspection of the LEA and secondly by an office re-organisation (which affected me too – and left me carrying two roles for a nine-month period during the study). I considered that colleagues would not appreciate giving up their time for my interviews when already attending interviews with OfSTED Inspectors or for new jobs – an obvious point, but one which postponed my collection of primary evidence to later in my study than originally intended.

Having explained the reasoning behind *how* I conducted my study, I turn next to its focus, and Part III provides a literary overview of the key debates informing my research questions. I start with a consideration of how changes in the conception of education policy have affected the role of the LEA – and thus the roles of my colleagues and myself.

PART III: EDUCATION POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

“Education.....is predominantly to do with teaching and learning, overcoming inequality and seeking social justice. All the stakeholders respond to such an agenda.” (Brighouse, 2000, p.25)

Brighouse would certainly argue that the promotion of equality is a key role for educationalists, and this is my belief too. My thesis is that, even though the power of LEAs in relation to their schools has diminished, Officers still have an important role to play in promoting equality and combating inequality. In my Introduction I outlined the questions central to my research in support of that thesis, and I return to them now – in essence, Parts III and IV explore the issues behind my questions and provide the context for interpreting my findings; Part III considers the role of the LEA and its Officers within the context of recent conceptions of education policy and administration, and Part IV explores conceptions of overcoming inequality and seeking social justice.

I have already identified that ‘Trentshire’ is affected by external events and processes - although I am using it as a case it is not discrete since events within the county are driven and influenced by national requirements and initiatives. In Part III I offer an overview from the literature of the national policy context, exploring issues and debates which have relevance for my study – but one which is necessarily condensed by space restrictions. Chapter 5 identifies key elements within the changing conceptions of education which have shaped the development of equality policies; Chapter 6 considers the role of LEA Officers in the context of the changing nature of the relationship between local and national government.

Chapter 5 EDUCATION POLICY: CONFLICT AND CHANGE

Brighouse's comment quoted at the start of Part III implies consensus across all educational 'stakeholders' – by whom he means LEAs, teachers and learners – but the full context of his article reveals a concern that central government stands outside this understanding, and worse, that it is imposing a different, less acceptable educational agenda. He goes on to say:

“So the school improvement urged on us remains, of course, essential. But it is not enough. More is needed. We do not need millions of unskilled or semi-skilled labourers.....so we need urgently to scale new heights of achievement.” (Brighouse, 2000, p.25)

There are tensions here, between Brighouse's vision of education as 'seeking social justice' and one grounded in the economics of a skilled workforce; of the views of 'stakeholders' being set aside by an agenda both 'urged' from above and deemed 'not enough'. In this Chapter I look more closely at the national education agenda over the past fifty years, and consider the tensions and conflicts within it. Space does not permit an in-depth analysis – my interest is in how the changes and balances have helped shape the role and functions of educational administration in 'Trentshire' in relation to the promotion of equality.

I start by considering in more detail the tension identified in the previous paragraph between the concerns of social justice and those of efficiency. Ball describes this as a 'basic and apparently irredeemable tension' (Ball, 1997, p.271); Ozga as a tension at the heart of education policy making (Ozga, 2000, p.9). Ozga argues – as do I – that education offers the potential to improve life chances and opportunities, and thus has the potential to go beyond the reproduction of inequality and the maintenance of conservative social

formations. It is this belief that education is a change-agent, and that practitioners have a role to play in the removal of barriers created by inequalities of class, gender, race, and disability, which informs my thesis that 'Trentshire' LEA Officers have a role to play in promoting equality.

But the national agenda – particularly in the last twenty years – has been dominated by the concerns of efficiency, with successive governments seeking to use education as a means of improving economic productivity; as workforce training, as a sorting and selection mechanism for distributing opportunities (Ozga, 2000, p.10). There has been – and continues to be - a dominant emphasis on raising overall academic standards through 'school improvement', in spite of evident tension with New Labour's increasingly strong 'social inclusion' agenda. Concerns of efficiency are also dominant in recent conceptions of education policy and administration over the past twenty years – a point of particular relevance to my study as it affects the role of LEA Officers.

I shall describe the changing roles of LEAs in more detail in my next chapter, but here I want briefly to set the context. A major theme of educational policy in the second half of the twentieth century has been the tension between two discourses, 'welfarism' and 'managerialism'. The 'welfarist' discourse, dominant from the Second World War until the mid-80s, was characterised by a broadly Keynesian position and embraced a whole range of values and practices drawing on diverse and often contradictory sets of concepts, but valuing social cohesion, equality and equity and placing the principles of social justice and equality of opportunity at the heart of policy-making (Radnor et al., 1996, p.1). Gewirtz lists amongst the most popular 'welfarist' discourses in education those revolving around ideological commitments to: equality of opportunity; valuing all children equally; equal and supportive relationships; caringness; child-centredness; comprehensive schooling; multi-culturalism; anti-

racism; girl friendliness; anti-sexism; developing critical citizens; democratic participation and social transformation (Gewirtz, 2002, p.31). Education administration during this period was bureau-professional, with power largely in the hands of middle-class, white able-bodied male professionals; LEA Officers were all qualified teachers and demonstrated a strong commitment to public service values and social justice (ibid, p.32). Processes were essentially consensual, reflecting the shared concerns of central government, local government and the teachers, and developed round principles of access and entitlement; ideas about entitlement were linked to post-war conceptions of citizenship and the development of a Keynesian welfare state as the model provider of essential services (Ozga, 2000, p.115).

From the mid-1980s the balance shifted, and 'managerialism' became the dominant discourse. The Thatcher government reformed education through neo-liberal ideological policies emphasising efficiency and effectiveness and focusing particularly on outputs and costs. Schools and local authorities were required to publicly report performance against a range of national standards - a process of using targets and indicators to drive, evaluate and compare educational products which Ball calls 'performativity' (Ball, 1999, p.1). Whitty notes that those prepared to 'manage' the national agenda could gain enhanced status and rewards, but those pursuing the traditional 'welfarist' agenda were no longer trusted and had to be controlled more directly (Whitty, 2002, p.69); Gewirtz describes a 'discourse of derision' mobilised against educational professionals in an effort to create a positive climate in favour of 'managerialism' (Gewirtz, 2002, p.5).

New Labour has retained – and even extended for both schools and LEAs - many of the managerial premises and language of neo-liberalism, such as 'performance monitoring', 'quality assurance', and 'scrutiny', increasing the emphasis on school improvement and target

setting by adding areas such as pupil attendance and exclusion. Local government is subjected to regulation through regular inspection by OfSTED and the Audit Commission, and through the requirement to scrutinise service delivery via the statutory Best Value Review process, which combines elements of managerial 'performativity' with requirements to 'consult' and 'compete' – both typical of New Labour's focus on involving the community as partners in the programme of development and delivery. However, this does not signal a return to 'welfarist' principles.

Acting largely in tandem with the tension between 'welfarist' and 'managerialist' discourses is that between local and central government in the control of education administration. In the 'welfarist' period education was essentially a national service locally administered through LEAs, who directly managed schools and services; policies were locally set to meet local needs; and the key players were LEAs, central government and teacher unions working in partnership, with central government taking a supervisory approach (Radnor et al., 1996, p.1). Within the 'managerialist' discourse national standards dominated, and the major 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) effectively dismantled the role of LEAs and introduced a national education service, albeit one delivered through individual schools. ERA contained a tranche of interrelated reforms: a standardised national curriculum and assessment structure; the right of parents to express a preference for a school; the right for schools to be self-governing and 'grant maintained' outside LEA control; and devolved greater powers and responsibilities to school governing bodies whilst at the same time strengthening the control of central government. The effect was complex: whilst the autonomy of schools was enhanced in the area of control over resources, it was reduced in the control over what is taught (Bullock and Thomas, 1997, p.52); and power was effectively transferred from the local state to the central state (Whitty, 2002, p.86). The role of LEAs was reduced, with responsibilities and funding devolved to individual school

governing bodies or restricted by central government – issues which I shall pick up in my next chapter.

Neo-liberal policies also established a new political order based on a change in relations of power, values and organisation between the individual and the system (Radnor et al., 1996, p.2). Neo-liberalism rests on a set of assumptions grounded in economics and philosophy – in particular the supremacy of the free market in promoting competition between schools in order to raise standards, and the right of individuals to make choices in their own interests. The operation of the free market celebrates individualism, a key tenet of New Right ideology; citizens are assigned the right of the individual consumer, and left to make whatever gains they can in terms of acquiring social and economic status. Everyone has an apparently equal chance of utilising their powers of consumer choice and control, and those who do not exploit their opportunities have only themselves to blame – individual effort is the key to success, not social 'welfarism'. Education is treated as a private good rather than a public responsibility (Whitty, 2002, p.79), and as with any other form of commodity selling, is assumed to become more efficient in response to competition (Ozga, 2000, p.60). The market place cannot by definition produce equality (Epstein, 1993, p.43) and within the market culture it is acceptable for there to be winners and losers. This is a rhetoric of equality through consumer rights. Social inequality becomes a natural outcome of individual action in key policy decisions, particularly the 'rational' choice that schools make to select pupils with social and cultural capital; the likelihood that parents will make competitive choices to advantage their own children at the expense of the community as a whole; and the privatisation of provision so that individual parents can purchase at the expense of those who cannot pay (Ozga, 2000, p.62).

The inherent tensions between neo-liberal education policies based on individual rights and market forces and those based on

comprehensive values of social justice are illustrated by Gewirtz’s tabulation of the characteristic values of schools in the different theoretical conceptions.

Table 5.1: Mismatch between comprehensive and market values

Comprehensive values	Market values
Student needs	Student performance
Universalism	Differentiation
Mixed-ability	Setting
Cooperation with other schools	Competition with other schools
Resource emphasis on ‘less able’ / special educational needs	Resource emphasis on ‘more able’
Caring ethos	Academic ethos
Led by agenda of social / educational concerns	Led by agenda of image / budgetary concerns
Oriented to serving needs of local community	Oriented to attracting ‘motivated’ parents
Integrationist	Exclusivist
Emphasis on good relationships as basis of school discipline	Emphasis on extrinsic indicators of discipline – like uniform
Distinctive	Emulative

Source: Gewirtz, 2002, p.54

Her table starts with the contrasting perceptions of a school’s relationship with its pupils, ‘meeting needs’ in the comprehensive model, contrasted with ‘raising standards’ in the market values model. The market values approach perceives parents as the consumers of education, and is not accountable to pupils, who are perceived as commodities in the competitive market (Epstein, 1993, p.43). Each child attracted to the school brings a pot of money through the *per capita* funding arrangements, though some are effectively worth more because they are virtually guaranteed to produce good results with a minimal investment (Gewirtz, 2002, p.123). The principle of competition is criticised for leading to selectivity and exclusivity, and

thus to resources flowing from children with greatest need to those with least need, producing an inequality of access to the quality of provision necessary for children to succeed educationally (Gewirtz et al., 1995, p.189), and disadvantaging less privileged members of society (Bullock and Thomas, 1997, p.52). Ozga cites research evidence to support her claim that:

“Markets do not offer equal opportunities to all to make choices of equivalent value, but instead operate to sustain and, indeed, enlarge already existing differences in the capacity to purchase goods and services.” (Ozga, 2000, p.64)

So far in this chapter I have identified key sets of tensions embedded within the conflict between the concerns of social justice and those of efficiency: between ‘welfarism’ and ‘managerialism’; between the rights of the individual and responsibility to society; between selectivity and social inclusion. My next set of identified tensions relates to conceptions of contemporary British society, but in explanation I need to refer again to the purpose of education. If education is understood as a site of cultural transmission, as a place where national identities could be fostered – or revised – and as a way of protecting and honouring ideas of heritage that connect to nation and identity (Ozga, 2000, p.10), then the shape of the national identity for transmission becomes important. The neo-conservative education policies of the 1980s and 1990s emphasised ‘traditional’ family values and a common ‘British’ culture (Epstein, 1993, p.25) - for instance, the White Paper ‘Choice and Diversity’ preceding the 1993 Education Act stated that ‘proper regard should continue to be paid to the nation’s Christian heritage and traditions’ (DFE, 1992, para. 8.2). This is in tension with the concept of Britain as a pluralist society, constructing those from other faith heritages as outsiders presenting a direct challenge to ‘our’ traditions and faith (Gillborn, 1997, p.353).

More recently the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (The Parekh Report) argues that:

“If Britain is to be a successful community of communities it will need to combine the values of equality and diversity, liberty and solidarity. In the language of political theory, the ideals and principles of both liberalism and communitarianism have to be pursued and realised.” (Parekh, 2000, p.105)

and considers five possible models to achieve cohesion, equality and difference – procedural, nationalist, liberal, plural and separatist (ibid, p.42). I will return to these at the end of Chapter 9, but at this point refer to Parekh’s claims that all five models can be found locally in Britain, with nationalist and liberal models vying for supremacy over the past fifty years, and that the task now is to work towards a synthesis of liberal and pluralist models.

Throughout this chapter I have placed the different conceptions in their broad historical settings – ‘welfarism’ in the period from the Second World War until the mid-1980s, followed by New Right ‘managerialism’, with the 1988 ERA as a pivotal point - but there is no simplistic association of policies with governments. When the Blair government was returned in 1997, many commentators expected to see an end to neo-liberal policies; instead ‘New Labour’ sought a ‘Third Way’ - a new set of mechanisms for service provision which attempt to avoid the failings of both old social democracy and neo-liberalism, and to reflect the needs of a complex and diverse new millennium society by reconciling a social commitment to pluralism with liberal emphasis on individual autonomy. Policies claim a “joined-up” focus on community empowerment through partnership – which is redefined to cover public, private and voluntary sectors – to combat social exclusion and improve education standards. Whitty explains the thinking:

“Policies that appear to have little to do with education, such as community development or the

building of 'healthy alliances', may ...contribute to the raising of achievement in schools. If disadvantage has multiple causes, tackling it requires strategies that bring together agencies that more usually work in isolation" (Whitty, 2002, p.117).

Inherent within New Labour's educational agenda is the tension between the concerns of social justice and those of efficiency, as Gewirtz observes:

"On the one hand, the government is committed to a model of reform that emphasises markets, compliance, standardisation, responsibilisation and pedagogic traditionalism, and that is based on a belief in the superiority of private-sector management practices. On the other, it aligns itself with the need to combat social exclusion, widen participation in the running of schools and to promote, through its proposals for 'citizenship education', the values of democracy, social justice and respect for cultural diversity" (Gewirtz, 2002, p.164)

In my next chapter I shall consider how these continuing sets of tensions impact on the role of LEAs.

Chapter 6 LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

“Local Education Authorities have really grown up in the last few years. We have made them change to do the job the public wants. They are not in the mood of resisting change, they are now into seizing opportunity.” (Estelle Morris, Secretary of State for Education, speech to Confederation of Education Service Managers, July 2002, quoted in the Times Education Supplement, 24th January 2003, p.16)

My previous chapter outlined changes in key educational policy issues over the past half-century, and I turn now to changes in educational administration, particularly the balance between central government, local government and schools. Recent governments have reduced the power of LEAs to the extent that their future seems threatened, but Estelle Morris speaks of ‘seizing opportunity’, albeit to a new, externally imposed agenda that ‘the public wants’. This chapter charts the changes in LEAs, and explains why I consider that individual Officers still have a key role to play in the promotion of equality.

The changing role of LEAs

Brighouse describes his early career as an LEA Officer:

“In those days, administration was what we did – education was a ‘national service, locally administered’. It was a deferential and largely unchanging and unchallenged world. The squirearchy and the city bosses willed and the officers administered. Management was a dirty word.” (Brighouse, 2000, p.24)

This was the so-called ‘bureau-professional’ or ‘welfarist’ period, when LEAs dealt with the provision and maintenance of schools,

including staffing, funding and the allocation of pupils; and provided services such as transport, careers, and adult education [Table 6.1]. LEAs also had responsibility for the local formulation of policies for schools, and, according to the 1985 Swann Report into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, could use it to produce policies which varied considerably from government thinking (DES, 1985, p.221). LEAs had both power and discretion to shape education to meet local needs.

By the end of the 1970s there was a shift towards greater central control, and successive Conservative governments removed power from the LEAs, which they problematised as controlling the character of local schools and causing high public spending. The 1988 ERA fundamentally altered the role of LEAs, by-passing them to shift power directly to school governors, thus diminishing their influence and power, and effectively enabling a simultaneous shift towards both centralisation and standardisation by increasing central government's direct contact with schools, and creating a 'series of fragmented localised systems, nationally administered' (Radnor et al., 1996, p.5). At the same time, LEAs became more accountable, with an increasing requirement to operate on 'managerialist' lines, and the scope for local discretion and choice reduced almost to the point of disappearance. They were left with comparatively few key functions in the period 1988-1997, none of which, according to Brighouse, related to the direct management of schools [Table 6.1], compared with eight in their 'powerful' years up to 1980. The Audit Commission, in their aptly named 1989 report 'Losing an Empire, Finding a Role', identified 'new style' roles for LEAs: leader, partner, planner, provider of information, regulator, and banker (Woods and Cribb, 2001b, p.1-2). These imply an advisory status, but in practice LEAs were left with roles in which time-consuming, resource-intensive, unglamorous casework grew as a proportion of total activity (Wilkins, 2000, p.341).

Table 6.1: An assessment of the changing functions, powers and roles of LEAs (1 to 5 on a rising scale of importance)

	1944-1980	1988-1997	1997+
General			
Planning	5	1	5
Providing	5	3	1
Purchasing or securing provision	1	4	5
Promoting education	5	2	5
Managing curriculum	3	1	1
Securing equity	2	3	3
Judging equity	4	4	2
Evaluating equality	1	1	5
Specific			
Influence in HE	3	-	-
Influence in FE	4	-	-
Influence in schools	5	2	2
Careers services	5	1	2
Special educational needs	2	5	5
Transport	5	5	5
Early years	1	1	5
School improvement	1	1	4
Youth	5	4	4
Adult	5	5	3

From Brighouse, 2001, p.115

By the time the Labour government was returned in 1997, LEAs were in an uneasy position, between the growing assertiveness of central government on the one hand and self-managing schools on the other, likely to be criticised from both ends of the spectrum (Woods and Cribb, 2001a, p.x). Their role lacked clarity - indeed the government Think Tank, the Better Regulation Task Force (BRTF), who studied the bureaucracy affecting headteachers, were:

“struck by the confusion surrounding the role of the LEAs. No-one we spoke to, including representatives of LEAs, was able to clearly articulate their different roles” (BRTF, 2000, p.10).

Clarity existed only in terms of what they should *not* do:

“It is not their role to run or intervene in schools, except those which are in danger of, or have fallen into, special measures or serious weakness, nor should they seek to provide directly all education services in their areas” (DfEE, 2000a, p.3).

In part the confusion stemmed from the legislative basis of Local Authorities. In their analysis of the functions and roles of LEAs against legislative requirements, Whitbourn et al. claim that to justify any action an Authority must be able to point to the statutory duty or power which allows it to carry out that act and if it cannot do so, it acts *ultra vires* and could be vulnerable to court action (Whitbourn et al., 2000, p.214). This incoherence is particularly acute in areas where LEAs retain statutory responsibilities but have limited powers to ensure they are enacted, for example in their responsibilities for statemented students and the management of school places (Radnor et al., 1996, p.5).

Uncertainty was exacerbated, firstly, by the lack of funding available to LEAs for central administration and services, with many of the roles and functions formally carried out by LEAs becoming the responsibility of individual schools, to whom the funding was devolved, or discarded (Radnor et al., 1996, p.4). Secondly, it was exacerbated by change - constant and rapid change became part of LEA life as they sought to adapt, to restructure, refocus and reculture their services to meet the new and challenging agendas (Woods and Cribb, 2001a, p.x-xi).

Shortly after election the Labour government sought to clarify the role of LEAs through the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act which effectively defined the role of LEAs through four major pillars, the LEA Education Development Plan, the Code of Practice on LEA-School relations, Fair Funding and the LEA Framework for Inspection. This did not restore the power of LEAs to manage schools, but attempted to put them on a more constructive footing. In practice, it proscribed and standardised the role so that LEAs rarely had control over either what they were required to deliver or the manner of delivery – indeed they became subject to formal Inspection by OfSTED and the Audit Commission. Hannon defines the relationship of LEAs and central government as that of local delivery agents holding a temporary contract and operating under ‘direction, licence and scrutiny’ (Hannon, 1999, p.210). Brighouse claims that LEAs have never been more constrained in what they can do:

“A regulatory regime is backed by statute and ensures that the sheer pressure of letters, consultation, advice and inspection from officials in the DfEE, OfSTED and Audit, coupled with a very tight and prescriptive control of LEA spending, have almost extinguished the last vestiges of their creative history.” (Brighouse, 2001, p.115)

In my next section I move on to explore the current role of LEA’s, although bearing in mind Wilkins’ warning that:

“The role of LEAs as defined through day-to-day practice is changing and developing so rapidly that any written analysis is likely to become outdated before publication.” (Wilkins, 2000, p.339)

Key elements of the current role of LEAs

By ‘current’ I mean the period from around 2000 until the present – a subjective definition based on changes introduced by the Blair government during its first term and developed further in its second.

The DfEE's Statement on the role of LEAs in relation to schools (DfEE, 2000a, p.3) clarified the role in principle, identifying three key responsibilities: firstly, specific planning and support functions such as school admissions and transport; secondly, supporting school improvement, especially in cases where OfSTED have identified schools as giving cause for concern; and thirdly, support for special educational needs. By March 2003, the Secretary of State had refined the three roles as: firstly, a core role to guarantee the infrastructure of a universal school system and to ensure that children with special needs receive appropriate support; secondly, a leadership role and thirdly a school improvement role (Charles Clarke, Speech to the Spring Conference of the Association of Chief Education Officers, 27th March 2003). 'Trentshire's' Director of Education quotes a list of five key roles verbally given by a Senior DfES Officer: advocate for standards; builder of capacity; honest broker; co-ordinator of children's services; leader of community regeneration; strategic thinker for an area. So LEAs now in principle have a defined role; but in practice confusions remain, and I shall look at two roles, 'school improvement' and 'leadership' to illustrate why that is so.

Firstly 'school improvement', which is generally considered to be in the forefront of an LEA's duties (Woods and Cribb, 2001b, p.4); although Brighouse does not rank it as amongst the most important functions for a present-day LEA [Table 6.1], presumably because prime responsibility for 'school improvement' rests with schools themselves. This, in essence, is the issue - identifying the LEA's actual role in 'school improvement' is not easy; it is generally considered to centre on 'challenge', 'support', 'intervention' and 'monitoring' (Woods and Cribb, 2001b, p.11), but as these functions combine elements of inherent tension and the LEA has no powers to direct, it remains problematic for individual LEA Officers to know how to tackle day-to-day issues without the fear of acting *ultra vires*.

My second example, the LEA's 'leadership' role is also underpinned by inherent tension. The Secretary of State claims that:

"LEAs have a unique legitimacy. They are part of an elected structure. It gives them the authority to lead the local education community. To set a vision for education. To bring different partners together to achieve change and improvement." (Charles Clarke, Secretary of State, Speech to the Spring Conference of the Association of Chief Education Officers, 27th March 2003)

but goes on to emphasise that LEAs are only one of several providers of public services and must now work in partnership with both central government and schools. OfSTED emphasise the internal partnership essential to effective community leadership in the relationship between the LEA and other council services:

"If the LEA is to improve the education service, it can do so only through leadership. But an education department cannot do this in isolation from the rest of the local authority. Leadership depends on collective and corporate commitment, on shared vision and agreed strategy." (OfSTED, 2003, p.7)

So there are clearly qualifications to the LEA's 'leadership' role – they should function as 'enabler' or 'facilitator', but as one player amongst several and without any real powers to ensure that the 'shared vision' and 'agreed strategy' actually happen.

As OfSTED note in their report on managing support for the attainment of minority ethnic pupils, there is only so much that LEAs can do (OfSTED, 2001b, p.10) – and even less if schools chose not to be led by the LEA. This OfSTED study illustrates the operational tensions inherent within the 'difficult job of leadership' in a context where schools manage the use of resources, but where LEAs must simultaneously encourage mainstream provision for minority ethnic pupils, and support and train specialist teachers (ibid, p.8).

It is this sense of operational uncertainty that lies at the heart of the current role – not uncertainty over continued existence like that inferred by Sharp’s critique of a possible ‘replacement model’ for LEAs (Sharp, 2002, pp.210-212) – but uncertainty over how to put the DfES’ prescribed roles into practice. Two recent research studies provide insight into the operational difficulties experienced by LEAs. Research by Ainscow et al. into the role of LEA Officers in school improvement strategies identifies a series of tensions and dilemmas they face in working with schools: ‘Where do I stand?’ ‘What is my agenda?’ ‘What style should I adopt?’ ‘Whose interests do I serve?’ ‘What type of relationship should I encourage?’ and ‘How much input should I give?’ (Ainscow et al., 2000, p.11-13), and notes the ‘sense of uncertainty and, indeed, threat that seems to permeate the work of senior staff within English LEAs at the moment’, (ibid, p.1-2).

Figure 6.2 Points of tension in the LEA’s role

Core role elements	Points of tension
Values expressed	Providing support to schools V acting as advocate of children and parents
Strategic direction	Assessment of local need and priorities V legislative boundaries and financial constraints set by central government
Climate	Competing expectations within the local system
How the leadership role is exercised	New initiatives may fragment connections in a locality
Mode of operation	Autonomy of schools V responsibilities of LEAs
Focus of activities	School standards agenda V broader social inclusion agenda

Extracted from: Riley, 2000, Table 1, p.61 and shown in full in Appendix 5

Riley, in her study of LEA leadership styles, identifies and tabulates the points of tension inherent in the delivery of the LEA’s core role elements [Figure 6.2, extracted from Appendix 5], between the national agendas and the local; between ensuring high standards and

acknowledging the autonomy of schools; between the autonomy of schools and the rights of individual parents and pupils (Riley, 2000, p.61).

These illustrations focus on the relationship between an LEA and its schools, but it seems that this is no longer perceived by the DfES as the principal relationship for LEAs, who are now considered to work 'within a context of shared responsibilities across the full range of central and local government services' to 'achieve better outcomes for children and young people' (DfES, 2003, p.1, Appendix 6). In July 2003 the DfES and Local Government Association announced a 'compact' between the DfES and each individual LEA, to identify and take forward local strategies within the framework of a 'Statement of Intent' for partnership working, in which the shared vision is that every child is accorded equal worth; enjoys learning; is equipped with the learning and skills they need for life and achieves their full-potential [Appendix 6]. It is too soon to comment on how this will work in practice, but on paper the signs look good – the approach is child-centred, not school-centred, locally-determined not centrally-prescribed. At the start of this chapter I quoted Estelle Morris' claim that this was a time of opportunity for LEAs, and as an LEA Officer myself I would cautiously support this.

I turn next to a consideration of the LEA's role in relation to promoting equality.

The expected role of LEAs with regard to promoting equality

According to Brighouse, there has been a shift in LEA functions relating to equality, from 'judging equity' to 'evaluating equality' (Brighouse, 2001, p.115, Figure 6.1) – a change of role from controlling processes to one of quality assurance and support, and a change of focus towards both combating disparities of outcome and promoting fair treatment. The LEA functions Brighouse cites as

priorities, together with emphases of recent DfES guidance, suggest that there are now three distinct strands to their role with regard to equality: through support to schools; through their support to individual pupils and their parents; and through their support, in liaison with other public services and partnership agencies, for social inclusion projects in the wider community. In this section I shall focus on the LEA's expected role in relation to schools, reflecting the emphasis given by OfSTED, but first I return to my earlier observation [Chapter 1] of a recent increase in statutory requirements for local authorities.

The Blair government has introduced a tranche of equality legislation: the Race Relations (Amendment) Act came into force in April 2000, triggered largely by the Macpherson Report on the Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence and giving public authorities a positive duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to promote good race relations between people of different racial groups. All public authorities – including schools – are required to produce a race equality policy, with a clear action plan for its implementation and arrangements for monitoring; governing bodies are required to maintain a race equality statement, assess and monitor the impact of their policies (including the race equality policy) on pupils, staff and parents of different racial groups, including the impact on pupils' attainment (CRE, 2001). There has also been legislation to eliminate discrimination against the disabled: the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act has been extended to require local authorities to take 'reasonable steps' to ensure all services are delivered fairly, and by 2004 to remove all physical barriers to enable access to buildings. The 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) creates new duties to prevent disability discrimination in education, including a planning duty on LEAs and schools to progressively increase the accessibility of schools to disabled pupils, not only through physical access to school buildings, but also access to the curriculum and to information in appropriate

formats and media – a requirement which has significant resource implications for both LEAs and schools (TEN, 2001, p.3).

Compliance with the law is clearly a priority for LEAs, and initially formed a key component of the criteria against which OfSTED inspect them - although the view of implementation here is limited to compliance:

“Does the LEA exercise its functions effectively to ensure that the pupils in its schools are not harmed and, in particular, *that action is taken to prevent and address racism* and to assist other statutory bodies charged with the protection of children?

Does the LEA comply with its legal obligations, *including equal opportunities and disability discrimination legislation* and, in its work, does it have regard to the Code of Practice on LEA – School Relations?” (OfSTED, 1999a, p.5, my italics)

In 2001 OfSTED, in conjunction with the Audit Commission, issued a more detailed framework [Appendix 7] for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities, including grade criteria for Inspection Judgments (OfSTED, 2001b, p.27-28). This is significant in that it provides a detailed list of what is expected of a *good* LEA (the full list covers all areas of an LEA's work, school improvement, special educational needs, strategic management and access). Authorities are graded from 1 (very good) to 7 (very poor); the framework indicates that a Grade 2 (good) LEA is expected to have developed and circulated clear policies on equal opportunities, including combating racism. It paints a scenario in which a 'good' LEA provides clear leadership and is aware of what is happening in its schools, and makes it clear that what marks out a 'good' LEA from a 'satisfactory' one are its strategies for implementation, such as

monitoring attainment, use of grant funding, and 'well developed strategies' including positive action. It is not considered sufficient to devise policy guidance or provide training courses or collect monitoring data – LEAs should be taking a more active role in promoting equality. It is a significant development from the earlier framework (OfSTED, 1999a, p.5), which required only that LEAs demonstrated compliance with regulations for equal opportunities, though it shares the same post-Macpherson emphasis on racial equality. The requirement now is for evidence of effective implementation – authorities who merely provide policies or basic advice to schools are judged as poor; good LEAs are clearly those who work effectively to ensure that schools are able to implement policies themselves, and it is to the issue of policy implementation that I turn next.

The role of the LEA in policy implementation

My thesis is that individual LEA Officers play a key role in policy implementation – although schools are responsible for the formulation and delivery of policies within schools, Officers retain roles in, firstly, providing guidance and support to schools; secondly, in supporting individual pupils and their parents through effective service delivery; and thirdly, through working with the Council's partner agencies. The shared partnerships arrangements in which LEAs now work have complicated the 'implementation chain' and increased the number of different groups and individuals likely to be involved at various stages of the process: elected members; LEA Officers producing and disseminating policy guidance; advisors; managers of support services; officers from partner agencies; governors; heads; senior managers in schools; classroom teachers. Critical here is my central argument that policy implementation is a social process, complex and messy, involving real people and real dilemmas; if this holds, then the large number of players involved increases the potential for both discretion and dilemmas, and this could positively or negatively affect capacity for successful implementation. To investigate this, I turned

to the literature for a consideration of recent policy implementation in an educational setting.

Clark et al.'s research study of how schools become 'inclusive' (Clark et al., 1999, p.166 – 171) identifies and explores four theories of policy implementation; firstly, change as socially constructed (ibid, p.166), where the development of inclusive schools depends on teachers' ability to construct the 'meaning' of inclusion for themselves as part of an overall cultural transformation of their schools (ibid, p.167); secondly, organisational theories, where the capacity of the school to be inclusive is determined by the extent to which the organisation enables teachers to operate as collaborative problem solvers (ibid, p.168); thirdly, where schools are seen as sites of conflicts arising between competing groups in complex organisations, (ibid, p.169). This reflects Ball's notion of 'peopling policy', recognising the key role of actors involved in turning policy into practice, but noting their ability to interpret, subvert and replace the 'official' policy by their own formulation (ibid, p.169), and has relevance for my thesis that the individual Officer has a key role to play in policy implementation. Fourthly, the dilemmatic perspective, which sees 'dilemmas' as more than accidental and temporary difficulties arising in particular situations, regarding social life itself as essentially dilemmatic since it involves choosing between courses of action which are to a greater or lesser extent mutually exclusive, such as the dilemma of 'commonality' versus 'difference' (ibid, p.170).

Underpinning this whole discussion is the assumption that policy *implementation* will lead to *change*, and thus to improvement. Fullan – whose work informs the theories of change explored by Clark - draws a distinction between implementation, the process of putting into practice a new policy (Fullan, 2001, p.69), and change, which he sees as above all a dynamic process involving interactive variables over time (ibid, p.71), arguing that reform is not just putting policy in place, but involves changing cultures (ibid, p.7). He argues that real

change is most likely to occur where individuals work in organisations which enable them to explore the meaning of change and where meanings are shared with other individuals, seeing clarity of shared meaning as essential if all players are to understand *what* it is that should change, and *how* that can best be accomplished, while realising that the *what* and *how* constantly interact and shape each other (ibid, p.7). This view is in evident tension with the conflict and dilemmatic perspectives, but Fullan also argues that effective strategies for improvement are beset by uncertainties and dilemmas, claiming that the process of managing change calls for combining and balancing factors that do not apparently go together: simultaneous simplicity / complexity, looseness / tightness, bottom-up / top-downness, fidelity / adaptivity (ibid, p.71) – and in particular pressure / support, both of which he considers as necessary for success (ibid, p.91). This is essentially a social model of change based on a premise that the site of change is a ‘learning organisation’, with improvement characterised as ‘doing the right thing in the setting where you work’ (ibid, p.270), and in which the role of the individual is critical:

“It is individuals who have to develop new meaning, and these individuals are insignificant parts of a gigantic, loosely organised, complex, messy social system that contains myriad different subjective worlds” (ibid, p.92).

Fullan writes from a Canadian background, but his comments on the role of educational administrators in the change process are in principle transferable to an English context. Their first task, he says, is to ‘recognise and unleash the power they have to do good’ (ibid, p.179), and I shall explore the extent of power available to an individual LEA Officer in my next section.

The role of individual LEA Officers

I have noticed that the literature generally refers to the LEA as a collective noun, and rarely considers in detail the individuals who

make up that collective. As Ainscow and Howes correctly point out, the term 'LEA' means not only the central organisation overseeing education in an area but also the schools, and therefore headteachers, teachers and children who are involved in education in that area (Ainscow and Howes, 2001, p.1). The 'central organisation' itself includes a range of roles – elected Members of the Council and Officers with strategic, administrative or professional roles, including centrally employed advisory teachers, together with the clerical and technical support staff essential to any office.

Within the literature I note occasional references to professional experts based within an LEA Office – Educational Psychologists, Education Welfare Officers, Advisors, Inspectors – with the implicit assumption that these are defined and understood roles offering specific support and guidance to schools; but there are comparatively few references to the work of 'LEA Officers' and their role in shaping and delivering the local education service. Gewirtz notes that Officers in the pre-1988 'welfarist' LEAs were not 'just administrators' but played a significant role in providing support and expertise to teachers (Gewirtz, 2002, p.2). She does not outline the LEA Officer role in the post-1988 LEA, which in itself prompts questions of status and definition, but Brighouse describes in some detail the range and complexities of knowledge and diplomatic skills required by present-day Education Officers if they are to have credibility with schools, parents and Councillors:

“Education Officers who do not know and understand something about the realities of the classroom on a daily basis will not convince practitioners. But equally, if they do not easily follow the inter-play of policies of the different agencies, whether Education, Social Services, Sport, Housing or Health, they are unlikely to be able both to paint a coherent picture either to the elected member responsible for the overall scene, or to practitioners who are on a daily

basis dealing with the family and individual crisis and breakdown on the one hand and on the other providing a purposeful and focused set of learning experiences, both for the individual in distress and the rest of their learning group” (Brighouse, 2001, p.129).

In general LEA Officers have discretion in how they implement their daily roles, and thus face frequent dilemmas - a position akin to that of ‘street-level bureaucrat’. Hudson explores and develops Lipsky’s work on the ‘street - level bureaucrat’, emphasising the dilemmas inherent in the role; the position brings certain freedom of action and undoubted power of control over clients, but this is generally modified by the dilemma of working at the sharp end of resource allocation in a situation where demand far exceeds supply (Hudson, 1993, p.387), and by the problems of having to make difficult decisions about other people in potentially ambiguous situations (ibid, p.396). Vincent et al. used Lipsky’s work in their study of the LEA administration of special educational needs, finding that front-line officers have considerable discretion over the application of procedures and the control of funding (Vincent et al., 1996, p.476) and in general supporting Hudson’s view that in considering the dilemmas in their working day, ‘we can see just how problematic a role they are asked to play’ (Hudson, 1993, p. 397).

However, the impression given by much of the literature is that the role occupied by LEA Officers is that of ‘faceless bureaucrat’ rather than ‘street-level bureaucrat’. An example is the research by Cook and Swain into parental experiences during one LEA’s reorganisation of special schools following the adoption of an inclusion policy (Cook and Swain, 2001, pp.191-198). The study focuses entirely on parental views, with LEA Officers described variously as ‘arrogant’ (ibid, p.194); aloof, standing there ‘in their suits’ (ibid, p.193) and showing a lack of interest in parental opinion (ibid, p.194). Officers

are frequently rendered entirely invisible, with the term 'LEA' used to describe tasks which must have been carried out by Officers, for example:

"Positive collaboration and co-operative working practices between the LEA and Adamston parents...."

(ibid, p.191)

The study clearly expresses the frustrations and confusions experienced by parents, whilst remaining silent on the dilemmas experienced by Officers. For instance, one parent describes his annoyance with an Officer who told parents at a meeting they have no right to say which school they wanted their child to attend – a legal fact for parents of children with a statement of special educational needs. The LEA Officer, who had the difficult, and presumably stressful, job of having to explain the legal position to a room full of parents all of whom 'could have lynched' him (ibid, p.194) remains unheard.

One recent research project which details the work of LEA Officers is Ainscow, Howes and Nicolaidou's study of school improvement strategies (Ainscow et al., 2000), which identifies the various pressures, tensions and dilemmas individual Officers face in trying to implement central government policies in the local authority's schools. The chief focus is on the roles of LEA Advisors involved with school improvement, but the conclusion uses the more generic term 'LEA staff', implying that the findings have wider relevance (ibid, p.15-16). They note that LEA Advisors are faced with a series of tensions relating to their work with schools which reflect ambiguities that arise from the uncertainty of being neither an 'insider' nor 'outsider'; and from the uncertainty of whose agenda dominates – the school's or the LEA's (ibid, p.11). Other tensions arise from uncertainties of appropriate style, particularly between challenge and support, from whose interests are, or should be, being served (ibid, p.12), from what type of relationship should be encouraged and how much input to give (ibid, p.13).

In conclusion, Ainscow et al. note that LEA staff are faced with considerable tensions as they use their deep experience of local conditions to do what they believe to be most appropriate, whilst at the same time pretending to adopt the government's prescriptions (ibid, p.16). The use of the word 'pretending' is interesting, as is the researchers comment that:

"A worrying aspect of this informal policy of concealment is that it may well prevent those who are guiding the national reform effort from learning as a result of what is happening on the ground." (ibid, p.16)

LEA Officers, it seems, cannot win.

Summary

In Part III I have used evidence from the literature to support my claim that, although the power of LEAs in relation to schools has diminished, individual officers retain a key role in promoting equality policy. LEAs have endured, survived and adapted to a period of change enforced by central government, during which their roles and power relations have been significantly redefined. From being major service providers and school managers until the 1980s, LEAs first saw their power restricted and agendas controlled, and have emerged to become facilitators, working to improve standards of teaching and learning in the local community. The emphasis is on 'local authority working' rather than 'LEA', with Officers working with colleagues from other Council services, partner agencies and schools, and on supporting pupils and their parents rather than schools.

My impression from the recent literature is that LEAs are now on a firmer footing with a more positive role, both in the wider social inclusion agenda for parents and in supporting schools in

implementing their own equality policies. But research, and my own experience, suggests that the role is not easy in practice, and I discussed the tensions and dilemmas inherent in their school improvement and leadership roles and in policy implementation, and will pick up these issues again in Part VI when I consider the views of my 'Trentshire' colleagues.

From discussing the role of LEA Officers in promoting equality, I turn next to a consideration of the equality policies themselves.

PART IV: TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

“The movement towards equality and equal opportunities can be said to have been going on for centuries.....While it is a continuous tradition, attention to social justice issues has gone in and out of academic and political fashion, as has the approval of words such as ‘equality’, ‘social justice’, ‘social emancipation’ and ‘social inclusion’. In Britain, in 1997, social justice became a term which the government used with approval.” (Griffiths, 1998a, p.9)

In Part IV I give some context to the vision of equality that ‘Trentshire’ Officers promote. As Griffiths explains, conceptions and terminologies surrounding ‘equality’ and ‘inequality’ are dynamic, and I present an overview from the literature of changes over the past half-century, starting with an exploration of the discourse apparently dominant in ‘Trentshire’ – ‘equality’.

Chapter 7 CONCEPTIONS OF EQUALITY

When I started this study in 1999 the equality term most frequently used in ‘Trentshire’ was ‘*equal opportunities*’; but three years later the Chief Executive was urging a move towards ‘*diversity*’; a conceptual move from stressing similarities to stressing difference. In this chapter I explore these two strands, characterised by Cline’s study on teaching minority ethnic pupils as: trying to treat all children equally by playing down ethnic and cultural differences or alternatively stressing and valuing cultural diversity (Cline et al., 2002, p.2). Others see the strands as *complementary* rather than alternative – the Parekh Report on the future of multi-ethnic Britain concludes that:

“The fundamental need, both practical and theoretical, is to treat people equally and to treat them with regard and respect for difference.....Neither equality nor

respect for difference is a sufficient value on its own.

The two must be held together, mutually challenging and supportive.” (Parekh, 2000, p.105)

I start by considering the strand emphasising similarities.

Stressing similarities: ‘equal opportunities’

‘Equal opportunities’ is generally perceived as the ‘acceptable’ ideological framework for combating inequality (Williams, 1987, p.346), grounded in liberal egalitarian thinking and forming the basis for many national and local policies (Weiner, 1985, p.5). The term lacks consensus of meaning, but is generally considered to contain strands broadly grouped as focusing on either equality of *treatment* or equality of *outcomes*. The Audit Commission, who set the standards for the public sector, understand the focus of ‘equal opportunities’ to be fairness, whilst recognising that ‘equal opportunities’, ‘equality’ and ‘diversity’ are frequently used as though interchangeable:

“fairness – developing policies and practices that tackle inequalities, aiming to ensure that all staff are treated fairly, and that service users do not experience discrimination.” (Audit Commission, 2002a, p.9)

The ‘equal treatment’ strand is principally concerned with fairness, but as the basic plank of meritocracy will allow some of those competing on a fair basis to do better than others (Bagilhole, 1997, p.37). The assumption is that the provision of similar educational opportunities for all will give every child an equal chance to reach their potential – though in practice distributing resources evenly across society serves only to perpetuate, not eradicate, existing differences (Jewson and Mason, 1992, p.329). Some writers identify ‘equality of access’ as a separate strand within ‘equal treatment’; others name it ‘equality of opportunity’; each is characterised by an emphasis on regulatory procedures and on the individual.

The ‘equality of outcome’ strand is a more radical approach grounded in the recognition that equality of opportunity could not be defined simply in terms of access to resources, but should be measured in terms of the effectiveness of those resources in equalising the overall pattern of results from unequal starting points (Smith and Noble, 1995, p.18). It emphasises groups, aiming to improve the initial chances of disadvantaged groups by compensating for different starting positions resulting from structural inequalities.

Jewson and Mason explore differences in the liberal ‘equal treatment’ and radical ‘equal outcomes’ conceptions in terms of principle, implementation, effectiveness and perception [Figure 7.1]. In terms

Figure 7.1 Elements of liberal and radical conceptions of equal opportunities

Elements of Equal Opportunities Policies	Conceptions of Equal Opportunities	
	Liberal	Radical
Principles	Fair procedures	Fair distribution of rewards
Implementation	Bureaucratisation of decision making (e.g. training)	Politicisation of decision making
Effectiveness	Positive Action	Positive Discrimination
Perceptions	Justice seen to be done	Consciousness Raising (e.g. training)

Source: Jewson and Mason, 1992, p.312.

of principles, the liberal perspective requires an equality policy to devise fair and non-discriminatory procedures, arguing that equality of

opportunity will exist when all individuals are enabled freely and equally to compete for social rewards; the radical perspective is more concerned with outcomes than procedures, focusing on fairness of the distribution of rewards. For the liberal, implementation requires the bureaucratisation of procedures, devising fair rules and regulations to ensure delivery, and providing training programmes to raise awareness; for the radical, it requires the politicisation of decision making and the promotion of correct ideological consciousness or specifically targeted action to redress particular needs. For the liberal, an effective policy leads to positive action to remove barriers to access, for the radical, to positive discrimination – an approach which is illegal in Britain, but which aims to promote the position of disadvantaged groups through direct intervention. The fourth policy element is perception, the extent to which policy is believed to be fair and effective; liberal concerns centre on whether justice is seen to be done, with processes and procedures perceived as fair and ‘above board’; the radical view sees policy as an opportunity for consciousness raising, looking for the long-term opportunity for social change rather than short-term procedural change (Jewson and Mason, 1992, pp.312-3).

Young perceives the ‘equal opportunities’ approach as discredited, partly through the ambiguity, inexplicitness and confusion of terminologies, but largely through a lack of visible change:

“The comfortable notion that equal opportunity (or fairness) would in itself lead inexorably to equal outcomes (or justice) is no longer so widely or confidently subscribed to.” (Young, 1992, p.257)

It is to a consideration of an alternative approach to seeking justice that I move next.

Stressing difference: 'valuing diversity'

The second identifiable approach to achieving equality is through stressing and valuing diversity. This line acknowledges that 'one size does not fit all' (Audit Commission, 2002a, p.10), taking the stance that differences between individuals and across groups are positive benefits rather than problems to be solved. As the Audit Commission explain:

"The diversity agenda is not about treating everybody in the same way, but about.....

- recognising and valuing difference
- recognising and accounting for inequality and disadvantage." (Audit Commission, 2002c, p.2)

At this point I feel it is worth exploring in more detail the emphases on difference and the individual at the heart of this approach. The concept of **difference** is variously defined in literature; Brah - who identifies four conceptions of difference: as experience, as social relations, as subjectivity and as identity - notes the tension between perceptions of difference as a basis for affirming diversity or as a mechanism for exclusionary and discriminatory practices (Brah, 1992, p.140-1). For Mason the concept of difference is a contrast between 'them' and 'us', but diversity entails recognising that both 'they' and 'we' are categories that are internally differentiated (Mason, 2000, p.3). He argues that difference itself is not a problem, although there are inequalities that derive in part from the conceptualisation of difference as a problem, but notes – as does Brah - that, when it gives rise to positive assertions of identity, 'difference' has frequently been a product of exclusionary processes and practices (ibid, p.145).

This emphasis on identity leads in turn to an emphasis on the *individual*, but conceptually distinct from the liberal emphasis on the individual underpinning both 'equal opportunities' and neo-liberal 'entitlement' policies. This is a postmodern perspective, grounded in

the recognition that individual identities are shaped by their multiple and simultaneous positions in complex, changing and often contradictory patterns of power relations (Middleton, 1993, p.128), and seeking understanding of equality through diversity, recognising and harnessing differences to create a positive environment in which each individual feels valued. The role of 'difference' in constructing identity formed part of Cline et al.'s research into minority ethnic children in mainly white schools - they claim that it is partly through recognising and being aware of differences that individuals and those around them construct a sense of who they are (Cline et al., 2002, p.42).

'Diversity' is a philosophy of inclusion and acceptance, of equal worth or equal value, of celebrating plurality whilst recognising the fragmentation, dispersal and discontinuity of society (Kenway, 1995, p.131). It is this concept which, following 'Trentshire's' Best Value Review of equality, the Chief Executive identified as a preferred path, particularly in the context of the Council's role as employer. He was referring principally to 'managing diversity' - a business approach grounded in the recognition that a diverse workforce constitutes a business strength, enabling every member of an organisation to perform to his or her potential through recognition and valuing of difference. To quote Thomas and Ely:

"With the model fully in place, members of the organisation can say, 'We are all on the same team, *with* our differences – not *despite* them'" (Thomas and Ely, 2001, p.51, their italics)

McDougall defines 'managing diversity' as a conception highlighting the importance of difference, where difference is welcomed, even to be celebrated, and contrasts this with the 'equal opportunities' search for equality as 'conditions where men and women are treated the same' (McDougall, 1996, p.62). She identifies six key conceptual differences [Figure 7.2], contrasting the internally initiated, inclusive,

cultural and proactive aspects of ‘managing diversity’ with the externally driven, specific, procedural and reactive basis of ‘equal opportunities’, but argues that the two lines should be seen as complementary.

Figure 7.2 Differences between managing diversity and equal opportunities

Managing diversity	Equal Opportunities
Internally initiated (business driven)	Externally initiated (legally driven)
Focus on developing potential	Focus on avoiding discrimination
Proactive	Reactive
Qualitative focus (culture, movement)	Quantitative focus (numbers of groups employed)
Concern of all employees	Seen as concern of HR
Focus on all individuals	Focus on specific groups
Assumes pluralism	Assumes assimilation

Derived from McDougall, 1996, pp.64-65

There is increasing reference to ‘diversity’ in public sector literature - in 2002 the Audit Commission published two reports, ‘Equality and Diversity’ and ‘Directions in Diversity’ to share learning, identify barriers and drivers for change, and to propose practical suggestions for the effective implementation of the diversity agenda across the public sector (Audit Commission, 2002c, p.3). It is also identifiable in recent DfES literature – the new “Compact” between the DfES and LEAs [Appendix 6] claims:

“We share a vision of an education in which every child is accorded equal worth.” (DfES, 2003, p.1)

The belief that all individuals have equal worth is fundamental to the vision of multi-ethnic Britain espoused by the Parekh Report, as is respect for difference (Parekh, 2000, p.viii), but a major message of

the report is that citizens are not only individuals – a key element of difference – but members of communities:

“Every society needs to be cohesive as well as respectful of diversity, and must find ways of nurturing diversity whilst fostering a common sense of belonging.” (ibid, p.ix)

In this Chapter I have used the literature to unpick the conceptual strands within ‘equality’, and I next turn my attention to issues of social justice.

Chapter 8 SOCIAL JUSTICE

“In Britain, in 1997, social justice became a term which the government used with approval.” (Griffiths, 1998a, p.9)

In this Chapter I present an overview from literature of the term ‘social justice’, which Griffiths implies is politically associated with the New Labour government – if it has ‘government approval’ as she claims, then it will impact on the public sector context in which ‘Trentshire’ Officers work. The dominant discourse for government policies has traditionally been liberal ‘equal opportunities’, but as Chapter 7 has shown, there are now signs of a shift - Whitty sees New Labour policy as transcending both the egalitarianism of the old left and the acceptance of inequality by the New Right and replacing both with the concept of social inclusion (Whitty, 2002, p.23).

I start with a consideration of terminology. Griffiths makes clear her personal preference for ‘social justice’ above ‘equality’ and ‘equal opportunities’ which she feels have been devalued (Griffiths, 1998a, p.9), and argues that ‘social justice’ is a broader concept:

“more fundamental than equality as a guide to how we should act in relation to society and its educational institutions.” (ibid, p.86)

identifying within this statement that it is about the relationship between individuals and society, about processes and involving value judgments. Her definition gives social justice a concern with structural injustices, and an association with distributive justice:

“A dynamic state of affairs which is good for the common interest, where that is taken to include the good of each and also the good of all, in an acknowledgment that one depends on the other. The good depends on there being a right distribution of

benefits and responsibilities.” (Griffiths, 1998b, p.302)

This association with distribution is the conventional Rawlsian understanding of social justice, which is traditionally conceived in terms of how goods and rights are distributed in society – or more particularly, to *individuals* in society. Gewirtz identifies two dominant strands within conventional notions of distributive justice: the liberal conception of ‘equality of opportunity’ and the radical conception of ‘equality of outcome’ (which I discussed in terms of ‘stressing sameness’ in Chapter 7), and notes their limitations in failing to address the social hierarchical and power relationships within which the distribution of goods and rights takes place (Gewirtz, 2001, p.59). Elsewhere, she illustrates her point in terms of the distributional outcomes of the statutory National Curriculum Assessment Tests and the effect of ‘failure’ on those not attaining the expected Level, arguing for recognition of the causes of cultural injustices:

“Such practices which function as mechanisms of disrespect cannot be resolved by a politics of redistribution, but demand a cultural transformation, a shift in the values, language, relationships and structures of schooling. So if we simply prioritised redistribution we would sideline consideration of these cultural injustices which can have such a devastating impact on children’s sense of integrity and their psyches.” (Gewirtz and Maguire, 2001, p.10)

Gewirtz’s argument is based on Young’s view that the distributive paradigm conceptualises social justice in terms of the possession of material goods and social positions, focusing on outcomes rather than on social processes, and not applicable to non-material goods or rights, opportunity and self-respect because these are relationships (Young, 1990, p.25). Young and Gewirtz both make the same basic point that the conventional conception of justice in terms of

distribution of goods is 'weak' and fails to deal with issues of cultural injustices, but Young specifically excludes 'equality of opportunity' from her conception of distributive justice, arguing that opportunity is a concept of enablement rather than possession, of *doing* rather than *having*. (ibid, p.25).

Young posits a conception of social justice which focuses on the effects of oppression and domination rather than distribution, which she limits to material goods (ibid, p.8); her concern is the social structure and institutional context within which distribution takes place - the dynamic processes of social relations underpinning the distribution of non-material social goods such as 'opportunity' (ibid, p.15). This is a **relational conception of social justice**, focusing on the nature of relationships which structure society, and on power relations in particular. For Young, a conception of justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression, and where some groups are privileged while others are oppressed social justice should explicitly acknowledge and attend to those differences in order to undermine oppression (ibid, p.10).

Gewirtz supports the identification of relational justice as a separate dimension, arguing that this forces us to think in greater depth about the nature of relationships which structure society and which structure what we do, what we have and the effects of what we have and do on our lives (Gewirtz, 2001, p.52). She identifies three strands within this approach: firstly, communitarian mutuality, which conceives a good society as one which prioritises discourses of citizenship, stakeholding, inclusivity and social capital (ibid, p.54), and is bound together through a system of duties and obligations, and which she describes as essentially neo-Fabian and reformist (ibid, p.55) echoing Griffiths' association of social justice with New Labour policies². Secondly, Gewirtz identifies postmodern mutuality, which, in

emphasising that there is no universal set of principles applicable to the specific situations of all social and societal groups, logically argues that universal theories of social justice could marginalise or oppress particular groups. She sees postmodern versions of mutuality as attempts to address the tensions between balancing different cultural identities and creating forms of solidarity (ibid, p.56); and between the individual atomism implicit in postmodernism and conceptions of cultural solidarity, but criticises their inability to identify the particular conceptions of social justice to inform collective resistance to oppressions experienced by marginalised groups (ibid, p.59).

Gewirtz's third strand is grounded in Young's conception of justice as 'freedom from oppressive relations', which develops postmodern conceptions of mutuality and recognition into one more capable of informing anti-oppressive political and social activities (ibid, p.59), and which she claims is:

"a rich and holistic fusion of distributional and relational approaches to social justice that is sensitive to the inextricable linkages between the two dimensions" (ibid, p.61).

Young herself claims it is 'an enabling conception of justice' relating to the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and co-operation, and focusing on two key disabling constraints, oppression and domination (Young, 1990, p.39). She perceives oppression as a family of concepts and conditions, arguing that only a plural explication is adequate as group differences impact on different lives in a multiplicity of ways that can entail privilege and oppression for the same person in different respects. She therefore rejects a

² Blair's 17th June 2003 speech to the Fabian Society sets out his vision "to rebuild civil society around a new contract between citizen and state based on responsibilities as well as rights.

single essential definition of oppression, identifying five 'faces of oppression': exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence, claiming the presence of any one to be sufficient for calling a group oppressed (ibid, p.64). She sees exploitation, marginalisation and powerlessness as derived from forms of structural and institutional relationships that limit the material resources of oppressed groups and deny them opportunities (ibid, p.58), and cultural imperialism as involving the universalisation of a dominant group's experiences and culture and its establishment as the norm, thereby creating a paradoxical oppression for those outside the dominant group who are both marked out by stereotypes and at the same time rendered invisible (ibid, p.59).

This conception of social justice as freedom from oppressive relations has been criticised by Fraser as failing to recognise the tensions between a politics of redistribution and a politics of recognition. She proposes a **critical theory of recognition** which identifies and defends only those versions of the cultural politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality (Fraser, 1995, p.69), and distinguishes between four contrasting attitudes towards difference; firstly, differences as artefacts of oppression; secondly, as manifestations of the cultural superiority of the oppressed over their oppressors; thirdly, as simply variations which should be neither abolished nor extended, but affirmed and valued; fourthly – and the attitude she supports – that there are different types of difference requiring different responses. She argues that differences of the first type should be eliminated; those of the second universalised and those of the third enjoyed – a position which entails a more differentiated politics of difference (Fraser, 1997, p.204) and which Gewirtz summarises as:

“Not all differences are of the same weight or value and not all should be equally recognised” (Gewirtz and Maguire, 2001, p.11).

Gewirtz argues that Fraser's critical theory of recognition does not undermine Young's conception of justice as freedom from oppressive relations, but posits a modification to Young's framework which takes account of it. She proposes that consideration of how to oppose oppression by cultural imperialism should also consider which aspects of difference should be abolished – either because they are themselves oppressive or because they interfere with redistribution - which should be affirmed and which universalised (Gewirtz, 2001, p.62). This is an enhancement to a conceptualisation of social justice already broad and rich, and implicit within Parekh's claim of a politics of recognition alongside the struggle for equality and racial justice, claiming that non-recognition or mis-recognition can inflict harm, and be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being (Parekh, 2000, p.37).

I shall return to this discussion, and place my study within it, in my Summary for Part IV, but before that I consider the various models used over the past half-century to combat inequality and social exclusion.

Chapter 9 COMBATING INEQUALITY: CHANGES AND CONTINUATIONS

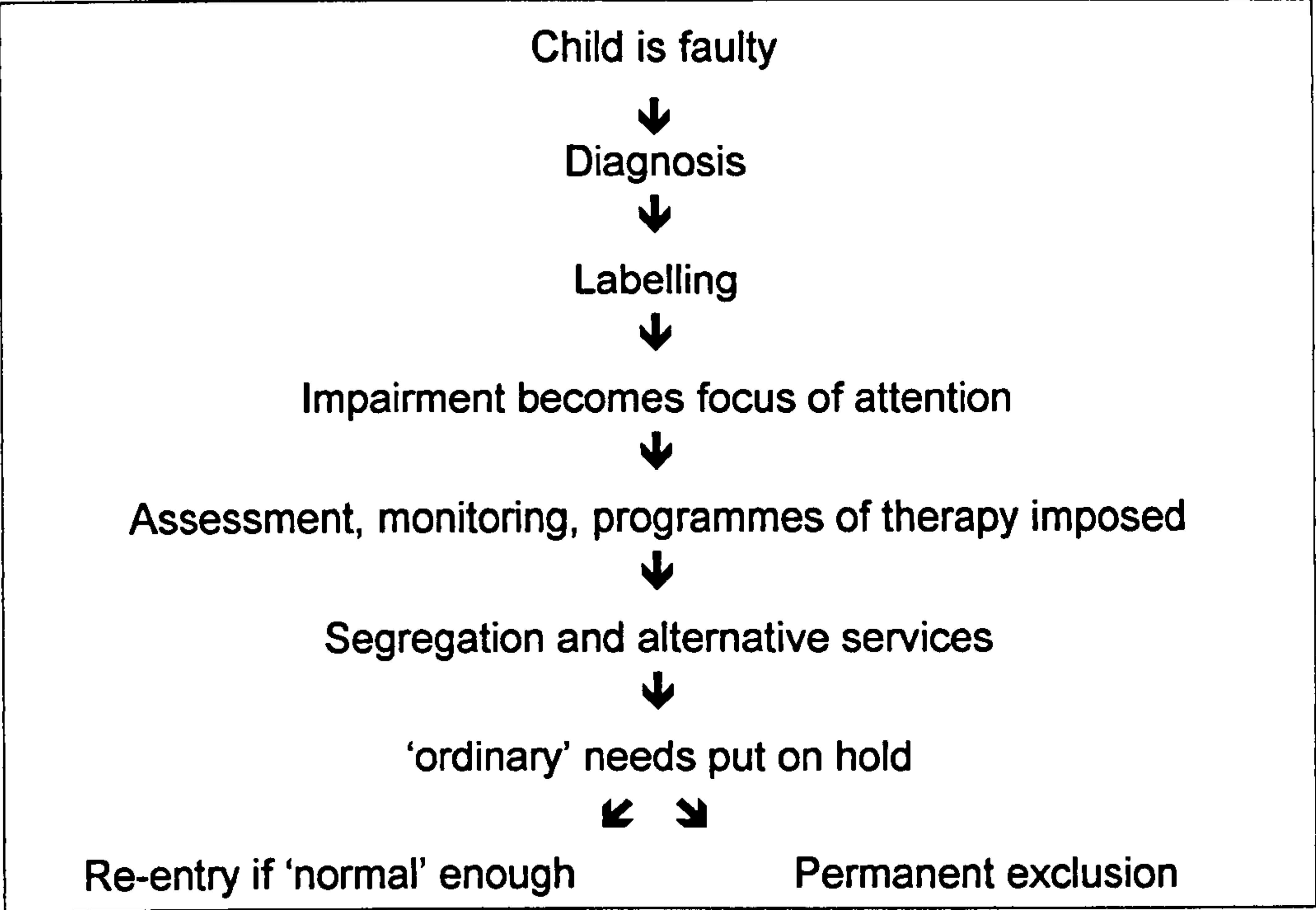
In this Chapter I move from exploring theoretical conceptions of equality and social justice to considering approaches to combating inequality within the context of educational and social policy. I shall consider key models within a historical time-line, though in practice approaches exist as remnants even when replaced by other models as dominant.

The 'welfarist' period following the Second World War is largely characterised by the 'assimilation' approach (Troyna, 1989, p.148) which assumes a definable essence of 'Britishness' – the dominant white, middle class, Christian culture - and that it is in everyone's interests that ethnic minority children be subsumed within it as quickly and effortlessly as possible (Jones, R., 1998, p.2). Assimilation shifts responsibility for change from the state to the individual, assuming that minority groups aspire to adopt 'British' values, beliefs and ideals, but requiring them to become invisible through the loss of their identity and allowing the dominant groups to both emphasise and protect their cultural dominance. Mason claims that British social policy has been consistently informed by assimilationist assumptions, with the onus on those who are 'different' to change to meet the norm, with the implication that problems will be solved when maximum similarity is achieved, with only a rump of cultural difference remaining to provide exotic diversion (Mason, 2000, p.2). Williams identifies this approach as a deficit model, perceiving ethnic minorities as deficit victims in need of compensatory education (Williams, 1987, p.340).

A similar deficit 'medical model' is identifiable in special education, where a child is perceived principally in terms of impairment or

deficiency, in need of medical ‘treatment’, a concept which Mason and Rieser illustrate diagrammatically:

Figure 9.1: The Medical Model



Source: Mason and Rieser, 1994, p.20

The late 1960s and 1970s saw a change in approach with the wide adoption of the ‘integration’ model, typified by the introduction of the neighbourhood comprehensive school, and by the ‘multiracial’ approach towards the teaching of minority ethnic children (Troyna, 1989, p.148; Jones, R., 1998, p.3). ‘Mutual tolerance’ and ‘cultural diversity’ are key phrases in this approach, which recognises structural inequalities but sees differences between cultures as a cause for celebration rather than conflict – minority ethnic children might be lacking in certain aspects of educational development, but are representatives of cultures with a wealth of rich and interesting traditions. Jones criticises this as the ‘saris, steelbands and samosas’ approach, likely to generate and maintain the very stereotypes it intends to dissolve (Jones, R., 1998, p.4).

Following the urban disorders of the early 1980s and the publication of the Swann Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, "Education for All" (DES, 1985), 'cultural diversity' was strengthened into '**cultural pluralism**' - implying an equality of standing for the various cultural groups represented in society - but at the same time oversimplifying the relationship between culture and education by failing to address issues such as which aspects of minority cultures are accepted and adopted, and which are ignored? (Williams, 1987, p.334) and whose values are being transmitted? (Troyna, 1989, p.156). However this approach acknowledges that Britain is a plural and diverse society, a belief at the heart of more recent conceptions of pluralism expounded by Parekh and outlined briefly in Chapter 5.

As the 1980s progressed, so did the view that many approaches to achieving equality had been oversimplified. Arguments developed that, in the modern world, all identities are more fluid, provisional and multi-faceted than some more traditional characterisations of cultural difference would suggest (Mason, 2000, p.143). Mason identifies two separate strands of origin, firstly from feminists challenging the essentialised conceptions of women, including black feminists challenging the perceived dominance of white middle-class perspectives and arguing that patriarchal oppression is mediated by racism in ways which make the experience and opportunities of black and white women quite different (ibid, p.144). Secondly, from within postmodern writing, the view that the pace of change in the modern world, together with an ever-expanding array of choices and possibilities, creates conditions in which individuals are increasingly free to make multiple identity choices (ibid, p.144). As the voices of those who had previously been inaudible began to be heard, it became increasingly clear that the older monolithic or dualistic sets of categories (such as class and gender) were too simplistic to work with, and new perspectives developed based on the realisation that a post-industrial, post-colonial era requires theories which can

accommodate people's multiple and simultaneous positionings in complex, changing and often contradictory patterns of power relations (Middleton, 1993, p.128).

By the 1980s the flaws and naivety of the liberal 'equal opportunities' approach had been exposed (Arnot, 1991, p.453) and a tranche of more radical alternative approaches were adopted, often local initiatives characterised by a desire to challenge and change the fundamental causes of societal inequalities and power relations. Weiner notes the range of policy strategies instituted by individual teachers, schools and LEAs anxious to enact the spirit as well as the letter of the anti-discrimination legislation of the 1970s (Weiner, 1997, p.9), though Troyna comments on the lack of a coherent, overarching framework within which locally consistent strategies to combat racial, gender or class inequalities could develop (Troyna, 1989, p.157). The 'antiracist' approach is one such strategy, based on the belief that the marginalisation, exclusion, and devaluation of Black culture by White culture is not an error of history but a product of power relations (Epstein, 1993, p.103), and thus works to change the root causes of racism, through the assumption that changes at local level can contribute to change in society. 'Antiracism' was characterised by a lack of consensus during the later part of the 1980s, and splintered into several distinct antiracist groups campaigning against multicultural groups as well as right wing neo-liberal and neo-conservative elements (Epstein, 1993, p.25). It is this conflict between the Conservative central government and left wing local authorities, several of whom sponsored radical local initiatives and were consequently demonised as 'the looney left', which underpinned many of the events surrounding the 'demise' of LEAs outlined in Chapter 6.

The Thatcher government retained its own particular interpretation of concepts of equality and social justice, refined to reflect the principles of meritocracy, recast as 'entitlement' and promoted rhetorically

through support for individualism and entrepreneurship (Weiner, 1997, p.10), with 'market forces' considered the best guarantor of fairness (Bagilhole, 1997, p.56). As Epstein notes, this is the notion of equity, in the sense of getting a fair deal, rather than equality, since the market by necessity implies inequality (Epstein, 1993, p.43). She argues that reliance on marketability means that initiatives designed to combat inequality are deprioritised by schools concerned to adopt dominant discourses in order to appeal to the maximum number of people (ibid, p.48). From the mid-80s until losing power in the 1997 election, the Conservative government had a significant impact on equality issues and very effectively drew a thick line under previous developments (Smith and Noble, 1995, p.19). They rejected the aim of equalising outcomes as 'unacceptable social engineering' (ibid, p.14), assuming that because 'a rising tide lifts all the boats' there was no *a priori* need to target specific groups in order to raise standards (Orr, 2000, p.23) and gradually withdrew funding and resources from initiatives on gender and 'race' equality (Weiner, 1997, p.10). The effect was that during the Conservative era equality issues were not only placed on the back burner but actively demonised (Blair and Cole, 2000, p.71).

Several aspects of 1988 ERA were made in the name of 'entitlement' and equal access, but did not address existing inequalities. The National Curriculum illustrates this well - Orr claims its introduction helped to reduce gender differentiation by restricting pupils' choice of subjects (Orr, 2000, p.17), but the Equal Opportunities Commission stress that equal access to the National Curriculum cannot in itself solve sex-segregated choice and engagement (Madden, 2000, p.46). In Chapter 5 I noted the tensions between the neo-liberal 'market forces' philosophy and universal conceptions of schools, and they are relevant here too. The parental choice and market forces philosophy of ERA contributed to a growing inequality of access to the quality of provision necessary for children to succeed educationally (Gewirtz et al., 1995, p.189); a claim illustrated by the relationship between the

marketisation of schools and the drive for better performance - schools depend for income on pupil numbers, parental choice of school is influenced by published 'league tables', and underachieving boys (or other groups) can lower a school's overall performance (Arnot et al., 1998, p.84). Many of the post-ERA reforms appeared to be ways for the 'haves' to escape from the 'have nots' (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p.7).

As noted earlier, from 1997 the incoming New Labour government introduced a shift towards social justice, although as Chapter 5 notes, many of the pillars of neo-liberal 'managerialism' apparently remain in place. But there are discernible differences from previous Conservative administrations; for instance an emphasis on particular *groups* of pupils (Orr, 2000, p.23) and on targeted action - New Labour initiatives such as the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (DfEE, 1999b) target money at specific projects to remove disparities in performance. Also significant is the focus on **inclusion**. This is presented as a process rather than a concept - a 'pragmatic approach, not grounded in dogma' (statement by a senior DfES Official at a 'Trentshire' Headteacher Conference, November 2001), and 'a process by which schools, LEAs and others develop their cultures, policies and practices to include pupils' (DfES, 2001a, p.2). The inclusion movement is strongly associated with special education needs, arguing for the inclusion in mainstream schools of pupils who might traditionally have gone to special schools; a philosophy conceptually distinguishable from integration and grounded in the social model of the child as centre [Figure 9.2], contrasting with the 'deficit' medical model [Figure 9.1] underpinning special education.

The inclusion approach is grounded in diversity and recognition of difference, and more recently has developed away from a narrow

Figure 9.2: The Social Model

Source: Mason and Rieser, 1994, p.20

special education needs interpretation to a wider one of social inclusion; with a claim by OfSTED that:

“educational inclusion...is about equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity and background” (OfSTED, 2000, p.2).

Although this statement appears grounded in liberal tradition, it is significant in recognising multiple identities, including social class ‘background’. It acknowledges, but goes beyond, compliance with equal opportunities legislation.

To conclude this chapter I refer again to the five models identified by the Parekh Report on the future of multi-ethnic Britain which I introduced in Chapter 5 (Parekh, 2000, p.42) [Table 9.3]. The first three promote unity over diversity, with strong assimilationist strands underpinning the nationalist model; and elements of the integrationist

Table 9.3: Cohesion, equality and difference: five possible models

- 1. Procedural** – the state is culturally neutral, and leaves individuals and communities to negotiate with each other as they wish, providing they observe certain basic procedures

2. Nationalist – the state promotes a single national culture and expects all to assimilate to it. People who do not or cannot assimilate are second-class citizens.

3. Liberal – there is a single political culture in the public sphere, but substantial diversity in the private lives of individuals and communities

4. Plural – there is both unity and diversity in public life; communities and identities overlap and are interdependent, and develop common features

5. Separatist – the state permits and expects each community to remain separate from others, and to organise and regulate its own affairs, and largely confines itself to maintaining order and civility.

From Parekh, 2000, p.42

approach within the liberal model, which tolerates diversity within citizen’s private lives whilst seeking public unity. The fifth promotes diversity and potential fragmentation, but the fourth – the pluralist model – sees unity and diversity in balance, with recognition of difference as a central value. This is the Parekh Report’s vision for the future of Britain.

Summary

In Part IV I have examined key strands of the equality / social justice agenda, using literature to gain an understanding of the policies 'Trentshire' Officers are expected to promote. I have considered two particular elements – the distinction between conceptions emphasising 'sameness' and those emphasising 'difference'; and between conceptions representing distributional justice and relational justice, including Young's conception of social justice as freedom from oppressive relations. Within the 'equality' strand, emphasising 'sameness' and based on distributional justice, I have considered both those with a liberal emphasis on 'access' and 'opportunity' and with a radical emphasis on 'outcomes'.

It is evident that this is a complex, multi-layered and multi-faceted agenda, likely to underpin many aspects of an LEA Officer's work. The picture is confused by the plethora of terminologies and lack of consensus on whether they are interchangeable or represent separate identifiable theoretical conceptions. Nevertheless it is possible to identify key elements in the debate: the construction and recognition of difference; the balance between the individual and the group; and the causes of oppression - and I regard the concept of difference as central to the discussion.

As Fraser points out, there are different categories of difference, some to be championed and others challenged (Fraser, 1997, p.204). The 'managing diversity' approach perceives difference – apparently all forms of difference - as a positive benefit, an asset to be not just accepted but celebrated. However, difference, particularly ethnic difference, has typically been seen as a problem in Britain (Mason, 2000, p.2), and those who differ from the societal norm are problematised as 'them' rather than 'us' – a potential site of marginalisation and oppression via cultural imperialism. But I believe that norm to be a social construct rather than an 'essential' category –

there is nothing identifiably natural and separate about 'being British' since British society is evidently plural, but yet many people feel able to identify 'British values' and 'British culture'. Brah explores related issues concerning the essence of 'being black' or 'being a woman' - she argues against an essentialist concept of difference and problematises the issue of 'essentialism' as a notion of ultimate essence transcending historical and cultural boundaries (Brah, 1992, p.126). She asks at what point and in what ways the specificity of a particular social experience becomes an expression of essentialism, and argues, for example, that 'woman' is not a unitary category because the word is only meaningful with reference to a fusion of adjectives which symbolise particular historical trajectories, material circumstances and cultural experiences (ibid, p.131). If the generally accepted meanings associated with being a woman, or black or disabled are socially constructed then they are capable of being challenged and changed.

A related issue is how to meet diverse needs fairly, and evidence from recent research studies identifies the dilemmas involved. Kenway describes this tension as the 'paradoxical problem of gaining access for women to men's benefits while simultaneously valuing women's ways of being' (Kenway, 1995, p.125); Clark et al. identify similar tensions in special educational needs education - 'how to offer learners who are palpably different from each other an education that is palpably the same for all' (Clark et al., 1999, p.170). They identify varying resolutions to the dilemma - special schools to respond to 'difference' or inclusive education to respond to 'commonality', but stress that resolutions are not solutions, and assert that 'in any attempt at stressing the commonalities between students, we should expect to be constantly confronted by the realities of the differences between them' (ibid, p.171).

I am asking similar questions in my research study: how 'Trentshire' Officers respond to the challenges and dilemmas inherent in the

implementation of equality policy, and I see the broad framework of questions formulated by Gewirtz, and based on Young's conceptualisation of social justice modified to take account of Fraser's criticisms, as a useful tool for my study. How, to what extent and why do education policies support, interrupt or subvert: firstly, exploitative relationships within and beyond educational institutions; secondly, processes of marginalisation and inclusion within and beyond the education system; thirdly, the promotion of relationships based on recognition, respect, care and mutuality or produce powerlessness; fourthly, violent practices within and beyond the education system; fifthly, practices of cultural imperialism within and beyond the education system? Which cultural differences should be affirmed, which should be universalised and which rejected? (Gewirtz, 2001, p.63).

The literature offers no clear understanding of how the various approaches fit together – or even if the perceived goals of one theoretical conception can only be achieved through a consistent approach. Troyna, writing in terms of approaches to combat racism, argues that the liberal and radical perspectives are irreconcilable in practice since their aims are so different (Troyna, 1989, p.152), but we now have a national government which advocates a pragmatic 'what works' approach above theory. Is it possible, for instance, to reconcile the tensions between stressing 'sameness' and stressing 'difference' through an approach which meets diverse needs through fair treatment? 'Trentshire' Officers are evidently expected to uphold procedures grounded in neo-liberal legislation and, increasingly, to deliver a social inclusion / diversity agenda based on postmodern conceptions of difference.

In Parts V and VI I shall explore the empirical evidence from 'Trentshire', starting with an equality profile of the county and then moving to a consideration of the perceptions of the Officers themselves.

PART V: AN EQUALITY PROFILE OF 'TRENTSHIRE'

In Chapter 4 I explained my intention to construct the view of 'Trentshire' available 'through the LEA's windows' and I turn now to describe the image constructed from evidence available internally to LEA Officers – and it is important to recognise that there is an element of myself in the selection. Chapter 10 uses evidence, including that offered by external assessors, to build a contextual profile of the county showing patterns of inequality and management responses, and Chapter 11 uses 'Trentshire' policy texts to identify underlying attitudes to equality.

Chapter 10 THE 'TRENTSHIRE' CONTEXT

The dominant 'performativity' agenda in which LEA Officers work encourages a focus on outcome data, so patterns of difference which constitute 'problems' tend to be recognised above those which are deemed successful. Most 'Trentshire' Officers are aware of the relative rural deprivation of 'Moorland', with below average patterns of attendance and pupil attainment and higher free school meal eligibility, and of 'Riverside Estate', 'North Moorton' and 'Queensfield' as pockets of deprivation within the larger towns. However, the picture generally painted of 'Trentshire' is one of a 'typical English Shire County', predominantly rural with 80% of the population living outside the major urban centre of 'Trentchester', and relatively prosperous - 'Trentchester' is a thriving city, with the historic centre surrounded by 'high-tech' business parks and affluent commuter villages.

It is also predominantly white, with only a small proportion (4%) of pupils from minority ethnic groups [Figure 10.1]. The Annual Schools'

Figure 10.1 Minority ethnic pupils in ‘Trentshire’ and England: January 2001 by Local Authority District³

% pupils in each ethnic group	East Trent	Moorland	South Trent	Trentchester	West Trent	Trentshire	England
Total White	97.9	98.4	95.6	86.4	95.6	95.0	86.0
Black Caribbean	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.8	0.2	0.4	1.4
Black African	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.9	0.2	0.3	1.2
Black Other	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.8
Indian	0.3	0.3	0.4	1.3	0.4	0.5	2.6
Pakistani	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.3	2.4
Bangladeshi	0.1	0.1	0.0	2.3	0.2	0.4	0.9
Chinese	0.3	0.2	0.3	1.3	0.3	0.4	0.4
Any other ethnic group	0.8	0.8	1.3	4.0	1.1	1.5	2.5
Not known	0.2	0.0	1.4	0.7	1.0	0.8	2.0
Total minority ethnic groups	2.0	1.6	3.0	12.9	3.3	4.2	12.0

Data from ‘Trentshire’ Annual Schools’ Census returns, January 2001
National data from DfES (DfES, 2001b, p.72)

Census returns for January 2001 show almost one in five (18%) of ‘Trentshire’ primary schools with no minority ethnic pupils, and one in ten with only a single minority ethnic child on roll. The large Traveller community are rendered invisible since the ethnic categories used for the DfES Annual Schools’ Census in January 2001 did not separately identify them, but ‘Trentshire’ has one of the largest Traveller populations in England with over 500 pupils at 60 primary schools across the county⁴.

³ There are five Local Authority Districts in ‘Trentshire’ (East Trent, Moorland, South Trent, Trentchester City and West Trent) and it is common practice within ‘Trentshire’ LEA to show statistics at this level

⁴ These figures are from a Traveller census completed by ‘Trentshire’ County Council Research Service in 1999/2000

Officers are generally aware of the Traveller community and the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities because they constitute a ‘problem’, but less aware of the larger groups of Indian, Chinese and Black Caribbean pupils even though the proportion of minority ethnic pupils in ‘Trentchester City’ is at the national average. A possible explanation for this is the comparative underachievement by Traveller, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils; Indian and Chinese pupils score above the county average and are therefore not ‘a problem’ [Appendix 8].

The ‘performativity agenda’ requires ‘Trentshire’ County Council to monitor the proportion of women, minority ethnic and disabled staff it employs to ensure compliance with statutory Best Value performance indicators. Figure 10.2 gives gendered data on teachers in ‘Trentshire’ primary schools and reveals a largely female workforce, but where the men retain power – 24% of all male teachers, but only 7% of all women teachers, are Heads.

Figure 10.2 Teacher staffing in ‘Trentshire’ primary schools: January 2001

	Total	Men		Women	
		Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Head	206	69	33.5	137	66.5
Full Time teachers	1491	181	12.1	1310	87.9
Part Time teachers	464	32	6.9	432	93.1
All teachers (Headcount)	2161	282	13.0	1879	87.0
All teachers (Full Time Equivalent)	1864.1	254.8	13.7	1609.3	86.3

Source: Annual Schools’ Census January 2001

The Education Department of ‘Trentshire’ County Council shows broadly similar gender patterns in its workforce – 75% of staff are women but the power lies chiefly with men; 27% of all male staff, but

only 7% of female staff, are managers. The Director and all four Assistant Directors are male; two-thirds of the 33 third-tier Officers reporting to Assistant Directors (including me) are female. The workforce is predominantly white and the proportion of staff known to come from minority ethnic groups is below the 4% ethnicity rate of the 'Trentshire' population. 1% of staff have declared a disability.⁵

The Education Department is structured in four service areas headed by an Assistant Director: School Effectiveness, Children's Services, Strategic Planning and Resources. Service delivery is chiefly the responsibility of third-tier Officers who hold considerable discretion over the management of their individual services but are subject to a formal performance management regime and appraised against corporate standards and agreed goals. Officers commonly work across service areas, and sometimes also across County Council Departments, in project groups or Action Teams (such as the Social Inclusion Team in Scenario C); an individual third-tier Officer is likely to be on a variety of Departmental groups, and thus working to several Lead Officers. The way in which equality is handled is a good example of this - equality issues are primarily addressed through services and championed through the intradepartmental 'Trentshire' Education Equality Action Group (TEEAG), bringing together representatives from each Service Area, reporting to the Assistant Director (Strategic Planning) and represented on the County Council's corporate Diversity Planning Group. There is no dedicated Equal Opportunities Service, and within the Department the lead is generally taken by the Head of the Multicultural Education Service, who chairs TEEAG.

⁵ Staff statistics on ethnicity and disability are incomplete. In the interests of 'fair recruitment' personal data is not required on staff application forms but requested after appointment. 11% of staff have declined to provide it.

'Trentshire' LEA has developed a tradition of 'partnership working' with its schools, which are semi-autonomous rather than controlled and directed. If matched against Riley's study of how LEAs conceptualise and carry out their role, 'Trentshire' falls somewhere between the 'interactive' model, where the focus of activity is on creating a local 'club' based on an agreed partnership with schools - there are Headteacher Steering and Consultative Groups working with 'Trentshire' Officers on several aspects of policy implementation - and the 'responsive' model, where the LEA is unsure about its role but responds to new demands from schools (Riley et al., 1999, p.31). Her study built on previous research which concluded that LEAs had adopted four different modes of operation which could be located on a continuum from 'interventionist' → 'interactive' → 'responsive' → 'non-interventionist' by examining the relationship between LEAs and schools. She hypothesised four models of LEA – school relations: service model, membership benefits, political and educational leadership, and although dated in that it was carried out prior to the Blair Government's Code of Practice for Schools-LEAs, it has value in providing evidence of the LEA model which schools theoretically would prefer, and of the features which emerge as 'highly rated' (ibid, p.43).

On the basis of comments made in the recent OfSTED Inspection and from my own observations of relationships with its primary schools, I feel that 'Trentshire' would rate well on Riley's 'membership model' characterised by effective consultation, collaboration and networks, and on her 'political model', since Councillors and Officers demonstrate commitment to education and protect funding wherever possible. Political leadership in 'Trentshire' County Council is broadly balanced between Conservative and Liberal Democrat and, as the recent OfSTED Inspection of the LEA points out, a high level of collaboration and consensus has been maintained despite several changes in political leadership over the past decade. OfSTED note the commitment of members to improving educational standards in

'Trentshire' and comment on the effective working between elected members and officers. It would rate less well on her 'service model', since feedback from schools indicates inconsistent standards, with constant complaints about ICT, Property and Finance in particular. It would score lowest on the 'leadership model' – OfSTED noted that 'Trentshire' LEA has not always been successful in translating commitment into a clear overall vision for its future role and what this means for its relationship with schools.

It is to a more detailed exploration of the views of the LEA's external assessors that I shall move next.

The external view: evidence from Inspectors and Auditors

Evidence of 'Trentshire's' 'performance' in equality – or more specifically 'race' equality - against national standards comes from the Government's inspection and regulatory agencies, the Audit Commission and OfSTED. The recent OfSTED Inspection report of 'Trentshire' LEA included a single comment on 'equal opportunities':

“The LEA has made an appropriate response to the report on the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence.”

'Trentshire' is deemed to be at Level 3 of the CRE Standard for Local Government 'Race Equality Means Quality', a better than average level which put it in the top 25% of English County Councils in the 2000/01 financial year. This Standard provides a toolkit for Local Authorities to assess how well they have incorporated good practice on racial equality into different aspects of council activities and is a statutory performance indicator (Audit Commission, 2002a, pp.14-17).

These external assessors also provide key information for 'Trentshire' LEA on what is happening in the county's schools. The Audit Commission school survey is a confidential postal questionnaire sent to all schools on their perceptions of LEA services, and in many

respects mirroring Riley et al.'s research study of schools views of their LEAs (Riley et al., 1999). Schools are asked to review the support they receive from their LEA in almost ninety separate service areas, including support for meeting the needs of pupils from ethnic minority groups and the application of equal opportunities legislation to school (categorised under 'Personnel Services'), and to make a numerical judgment on the extent they find it timely, expert, well targeted, effective and regularly reviewed (Audit Commission, 2002b, pp. 25-31). Responses indicate that local schools - or at least the 83% who replied - deem 'Trentshire' LEA as 'satisfactory', in line with national ratings (ibid, p.13-16).

OfSTED provide two separate sets of information: a detailed inspection report on every school, updated roughly every four years, and an annual LEA 'PANDA', a Statistical Profile for 'Trentshire', which summarises the judgments made on 'Trentshire' schools inspected during the year. These profiles, from which Figure 10.3 is extracted, are quantitative, showing the number of 'Trentshire' schools inspected, together with the proportion assessed as 'good' or 'poor' in each inspection category, alongside comparable figures for England and 'Trentshire's' benchmarking group of counties with statistically similar backgrounds.

The Assistant Director (Children's Services) recently sent an extract [Figure 10.3] to his Service Managers, drawing particular attention to the comparatively poor progress being made by pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) in 'Trentshire', and to 'Trentshire's' apparently poor standing in securing equality of access and opportunity compared with other LEAs. Discussions with Children's Services managers revealed that they found this data virtually meaningless, and were uncertain whether or not the differences might be statistically significant or skewed by schools within the sample. Neither were they clear what the categories represented.

But, as one remarked, “You have to assume that this is a step forward if OfSTED are taking these things seriously”.

Figure 10.3 Extract from Inspection Judgments on ‘Trentshire’ schools, January 2000 to July 2001

	LEA			Statistical neighbours			National	
	No. of schools	% Good	% Poor	No. of schools	% Good	% Poor	% Good	% Poor
Progress made by pupils with EAL								
U5s	16	62.5	0	88	73.9	-	65.5	2.2
KS1	21	52.4	4.8	113	63.7	0.9	59.1	4.5
KS2	22	68.2	9.1	117	66.7	0.9	58.1	4.3
Equality of access and opportunity	44	38.6	13.6	535	45.6	8.8	45.6	9.1
Provision for pupils cultural development	44	56.8	4.5	534	55.6	2.4	53.2	5
Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour	44	84.1	0	534	83.5	3.4	83.3	3.1

Source: internal ‘Trentshire’ document derived from OfSTED PANDA for ‘Trentshire’ LEA

LEA Service Managers in ‘Trentshire’ are not regularly made aware of issues arising from individual school inspection reports from OfSTED, but have easy access to them via the internet if required. As part of my study I trawled through a 20% random sample of recent OfSTED inspection reports of ‘Trentshire’ primary schools to see how effectively equality policies are put into practice. Following the Macpherson Report into the death of Stephen Lawrence there was a requirement that OfSTED should monitor schools’ strategies to prevent and address racism and the OfSTED framework states that schools must have clear strategies for ensuring they provide equal opportunities for all, and that these must be regularly monitored

(OfSTED, 2000, p.1-2). The guidance to OfSTED Inspectors is that equality should underpin all aspects of school life (OfSTED, 1999b, p.36-42).

Evidence from my 20% random sample of inspection reports of 'Trentshire' primary schools notes equality issues under one or more of the following sections: the educational standards achieved by pupils; curriculum and assessment; pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the management and efficiency of the school, though there is little consistency in the areas of focus. Every report in the sample has at least one – though limited - equality-related comment. Most are very superficial and based on conventional notions of distributional justice; several are short and anodyne ("equal opportunities are effectively provided"), but a few are a little more specific: ⁶

"The school has a commitment to provide equality of access for all pupils. The practice of withdrawing small groups of pupils for support work or other activities does mean that these pupils are missing parts of the planned class lessons, in this sense their curriculum entitlement is not assured."

"Pupils have insufficient opportunities to prepare for life in a more ethnically diverse society."

"There is no provision for people who are in wheelchairs."

This might be a reflection of issues at 'Trentshire' schools, but in the context of Osler and Morrison's study of OfSTED's strengths and weaknesses in inspecting schools for race equality could be interpreted as a failure of OfSTED Inspectors to use consistency and rigour. Their study, funded by the Commission for Racial Equality,

⁶ Note that these comments are not referenced to preserve anonymity

examined the effectiveness of OfSTED school inspection processes in monitoring race equality, and found that, although the Inspection Framework was a useful instrument, it was not being fully implemented (Osler and Morrison, 2002, p.334). They identified instances where the differential performance of minority ethnic pupils was not investigated; where comments on English as additional language and special educational needs pupils were conflated; and found that race equality issues were frequently marginalised or rendered invisible through inconsistent reporting in different sections of the report and by the use of imprecise language. They claim an apparent limited understanding amongst OfSTED senior management of race equality issues and a subsequent failure to prioritise these issues in terms of training, and recommend that LEAs should be provided with appropriate resources to follow-up and support schools which receive critical assessments of their provision for racial equality. Judging by my analysis of OfSTED reports on 'Trentshire' schools, the time when LEA Officers will gain reliable information about schools' handling of equality issues is some way off – my assessment of their value supports the findings of Osler and Morrison.

Chapter 11 EQUALITY POLICIES IN 'TRENTSHIRE'

I turn next to consider the view of equality issues in 'Trentshire' evidenced through LEA policy documents. There are currently several equality policies in circulation - a trawl revealed the County Council's Corporate Diversity Statement [Appendix 1]; the Education Department's statements on equality 'Equality in Education' [Appendix 2] and on inclusion [Appendix 9], a model Equal Opportunities policy for schools drafted in 1995 [Appendix 10], and revised in 2000; a checklist for LEA Services on equality and inclusion; another for schools, and a set of briefing papers to schools on: the Macpherson Report; Equal Opportunities Policies; Ethnic Monitoring and the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act. In addition, officers are working on a new equality policy for schools, 'Making Equality a Reality' [Appendix 11] updating and conflating existing documents on equality and inclusion.

This plethora of documents is the result partly of rapid change, requiring frequent revision of existing policy documents (though, it seems, not always the cancellation of earlier versions), and partly of the 'Trentshire' practice of producing different versions for different contexts and audiences. The principle is that the Council's Corporate Statement is cascaded downwards through Service Departments and Schools, providing the overall visionary framework but contextualised and developed at each stage; the practice is a fragmented set of policy statements displaying inconsistency as well as strands of commonality.

Following the introduction of Local Management of Schools in the late 1980s, 'Trentshire' schools were supplied with a model 'policy', a 'broad-brush' template or framework around which they can formulate and develop their own policies - schools can download an electronic copy from 'Trentshire's' intranet to 'adopt or adapt' as they wish. It

was originally produced as a model 'Equal Opportunities' policy by the 'Trentshire' Multicultural Education Service in 1995, and has been regularly revised since, most recently during the final stages of this study; the discussions surrounding that revision process are described in Scenario A in Chapter 12.

Reading policy texts

At this point I pause to consider a framework for analysing the policy documents in terms of the messages they convey. Ozga suggests there are three key issues; the source of the policy (whose interests it serves); its scope (what it is assumed it is able to do) and its pattern (what it builds on or alters, what changes or developments it requires) (Ozga, 2000, p.95). Richardson, writing specifically about policies on anti-racist and multicultural education, cites five: to help define the terms of the debate and mark out the agenda; to state the aspirations and values by which officialdom is happy to be judged; to permit and enable action; to influence the allocation of resources; to show the commitments which any job applicants will be expected to have (Richardson, 1988, p.4). Not all policy texts will contain all of these five elements, but he claims that most will include elements of principle and intent, or guidance on procedures for implementation.

As with any written text, the meaning and purpose of policy documents is projected by the choice of language and presentation, which work to limit the positioning of the reader and to present ideology as commonsense (Scott, 2000, p.27). Scott identifies a set of continua for considering how policy texts engage their audience: prescriptive / non-prescriptive; wide focus / narrow focus; open / concealed; authoritative / non-authoritative; generic / directed; single-authored / multiple-authored; visual or diagrammatical / written text; referenced to other texts / free of references to other texts; coherent / fragmented (ibid, p.18), and from these I constructed a set of framework questions for analysing the 'Trentshire' policies: firstly, what conception of equality is projected through the policy?

Secondly, does the policy identify particular approaches to action? Thirdly, what is the policy promising that the authority will provide, and what behaviours is it expecting from the reader? My findings supported Scott's observation that most policy texts contain contradictions, inconsistencies and unfinished arguments (Scott, 2000, p.20).

The Corporate Diversity Statement [Appendix 1]

The County Council's Diversity statement is widely accessible within 'Trentshire'; copies are sent to all job applicants and posted on office notice-boards and on the Council's website. Following the Council's Best Value Review of Equality, the previous 'Equal Opportunities' statement was revised and renamed, and now includes a clear opening statement welcoming 'the diversity of gender, ages, abilities, ethnic origin, faiths and cultures of the people who make up our society', - an indication of an emphasis on valuing difference, but one not sustained into the next paragraph which states that:

"It is a fundamental principle of the County Council's policies that all people should be valued *regardless* of their economic circumstances, sex, age, disabilities, culture, ethnicity, language (including British Sign Language), religion or sexual orientation" (my italics)

If diversity is valued, then perhaps this should be 'with regard to', rather than 'regardless'? – a point which was not lost on Advisor A in interview. It has an emphasis on groups rather than individuals, and I personally find the explicit list of groups rather exclusive (has anyone been left out?), although a lesbian colleague confided in me that she felt pleased to be identified as 'valued'. It is grounded in a conception of distributive justice – appropriate for a Council claiming 'equity' as a core value – with some limited recognition of 'Trentshire's' aspiration to remove causes of oppression through cultural imperialism or violence.

The document is designed as a 'high-level' statement of values and principles. It is written in formal and impersonal language, and although presented in clear jargon-free language in an easily accessible bullet-point format, remains impersonal, referring only to 'the County Council' in the collective. It is aimed at a wide audience – the groups specified in the third bullet-point cover most of the population of 'Trentshire', but there is no clear requirement on the audience to behave in a particular way. It makes several promises on behalf of 'the County Council' without making it clear who will carry them out or how they are to be achieved; some, such as monitoring, are 'first-order' procedural steps which stand a chance of being delivered, but others, such as eliminating discrimination, harassment and attacks on any group or individual, are 'second-order effects' with long-term impact (Ball, 1994, p.25), and appear as aspirational statements.

'Trentshire' LEA policy documents

The 'Trentshire' Education policy statement 'Equality in Education' [Appendix 2] is designed both to flow from the Corporate Statement and to be a framework for the more detailed model policy for schools [Appendix 10]. Both were written in 1995, but are currently being updated and conflated as 'Making Equality a Reality' [Appendix 11]; the revision process is explored in Chapter 12, Scenario A.

'Equality in Education' provides a statement of values and principles for the Education Service – but in spite of its title is clearly and explicitly a *race* equality policy, with no mention of gender or disability. It reflects the Corporate Statement in the accessibility of style and choice of language, but with the 'LEA' in the impersonal role; there is some attempt to distinguish the responsibilities of the LEA from those of schools, but no reference to the model policy for schools. It is primarily grounded in an 'equal opportunities' conception of distributive justice, seeking equality of access through 'equal entitlement' for 'all pupils', but also recognises that there are

aspects of school life which cannot be improved through 'equal entitlement' and seeks to remove oppression caused through cultural imperialism and violence by aiming to eradicate discrimination and tackle racial harassment. There is also an explicit statement that the LEA 'will take positive action to promote the appointment and development of ethnic minority staff' – a commitment which is surprisingly radical, and remains unmet.

'Equality in Education' committed 'Trentshire' to helping schools 'to translate the broad aim of equality into a set of challenging but achievable policies', and the *model policy for schools* [Appendix 10] was designed to fulfil that commitment. Like 'Equality in Education' it has a clear focus on race equality, but includes reference to gender, though not disability. It is broadly grounded in a conception of distributive justice, with a strong focus on 'equal treatment' and compliance with procedures, though there is reference to placing 'high value on diversity' and sections on curriculum and behaviour which imply a relational conception of social justice as freedom from cultural imperialism. It was designed as a set of statements which schools could 'adapt and adopt', and consequently appears fragmented; combining non-prescriptive value statements:

"The school encourages pupils to become responsible and independent while preparing them for their role in a wider context."

with precise guidance on approach:

"The value of 'talk' is recognised and pupils for whom English is an Additional Language are encouraged to use their first language where appropriate."

Many of the statements are in the passive tense, with little sense of ownership or engagement. For instance one states:

"All resources are reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect the ethos and aims of the school."

without making it clear who has responsibility, which resources are to be reviewed, how frequently and for what purpose.

The current documentation will shortly be replaced by *'Making Equality a Reality'* [Appendix 11; Chapter 12, Scenario A], which offers 'Trentshire' schools explanatory guidance and a 'menu' of statements from which they can select elements to underpin either a single equality policy, or separate policies, and is designed to promote practical application on the same principle as the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth et al., 2000) and the CRE Handbook for Schools, 'Learning for Now' (CRE, 2000). The redraft was chiefly to meet the requirements of the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act and the 2001 SENDA, resulting in a clear emphasis on race equality and disability – there is very little reference to gender. Compared with the previous policies there is greater recognition of diversity and difference and a stronger emphasis on a relational conception of social justice.

Schools' policies in 'Trentshire'

LEA Officers in 'Trentshire' do not have automatic access to school policy documents, although schools are generally willing to share them for a specific purpose. In spring 2000 schools were invited to share their equality policies as part of the work undertaken in response to the Macpherson Report, and thirteen schools (7% of 'Trentshire' primaries) responded. This was a self-selected sample, but broadly reflective of 'Trentshire' - mostly village primary schools with a predominately white, middle class intake, with a smaller proportion of larger urban schools with sizeable minority ethnic populations.

The nature of the exercise meant that most respondents had drafted their own policies and had not used the 'Trentshire' model. Most had generic 'equal opportunities' policies, but one had separate gender and multicultural policies; almost all were grounded in a traditional conception of distributive justice, focusing on 'equal treatment' and with the underlying assumption that compliance with procedures

which ‘pay due regard to the provision of equal opportunities’ will create a fairer school for all. Some display strands of a relational conception of social justice and emphasise the steps they will take to limit racial harassment or to promote cultural awareness through the use of ‘multicultural resources’:

“We ensure that all resources, particularly visual material, promote positive images of different genders, colour, race, creed, religion or ability”.

A few schools state they will target resources to address any pattern of underachievement by a particular group of children, and some that they will adopt pedagogic strategies, such as the use of mixed gender groupings, to promote ‘positive attitudes to difference’.

Summary

In Part V I have constructed an equality profile of ‘Trentshire’; the view presented is subjective, and I make no apology for that since each Officer constructs their own view from the plethora of available data. But some elements are likely to feature in most constructions—the geographic patterns of relative deprivation in ‘Riverside’ and ‘North Moorton’; and the inequalities of outcome related to ‘race’/ethnicity or gender, whether underperformance by Traveller pupils or the under representation of women in Strategic Management. Most Officers will include external evidence from OfSTED or the Audit Commission in their picture, though they may well feel that it does not tell them very much.

The stance taken by ‘Trentshire’ on equality issues should be apparent from the policy texts, but it seems to me that it is diluted by confusion. This is a view echoed by my colleague LEA Officers in interview, and it is to a consideration of their views that I turn next.

PART VI: 'TRENTSHIRE' OFFICERS: THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

In this part of my study I present and explore the evidence from the 'Trentshire' Officers, drawn in the main from the thirteen interviews, but also including three scenarios – micro-cases within the main case study - involving a wider group of players and drawing on secondary data (chiefly meeting minutes) and my observations as a participant 'insider-reformer'. In each chapter I first let Officers speak for themselves, and then analyse their comments to formulate an understanding of their perceptions of equality, role and policy process considered in the light of the literature.

Firstly, in Chapter 12 I consider how Officers perceive the equality and diversity framework promoted by 'Trentshire', including a scenario based on discussions around the drafting of a new equality policy for schools. Next, in Chapters 13 and 14, I explore how Officers perceive their roles and the tensions and dilemmas encountered in their day-to-day work, using Scenario B to focus on issues surrounding the introduction of ethnic monitoring. Finally in Chapter 15 I consider the strategies Officers use to promote equality policies, including, in Scenario C, the work of the Department's Social Inclusion Task Group. I start by outlining current perceptions among 'Trentshire' Officers of how equality issues are managed and prioritised within the County Council.

Managing for equality: perceptions of priorities

"I think when you say 'equal opportunities' people tend to think of *race*. They do in this Authority."

(Service Manager D)

This emphasis on race and ethnicity is perhaps unusual in an Authority with a largely white population; Service Manager A relates it to the impact of the Macpherson Report, but Service Manager B, who

has worked with 'Trentshire' for several years, offers a more likely explanation, claiming it derived from a lack of resources several years ago; there was no money to take forward a wider equality brief, but the Section 11 Grant⁷ for ethnic minority teaching offered a way to advance at least some of the issues through the work of the grant-funded Multicultural Service.

Gender is not generally perceived as a key issue – other than in the context of boys' underperformance in English - and is not explicitly mentioned in the new draft equality policy for schools [Appendix 11]. Advisor A claims gender 'isn't really an issue' as 'people tend to think that's sorted now'; Service Manager D at first says, 'It's not an issue, not something that I think about', but then reflects that 'There's definitely a gender issue in schools.' Service Manager C gives a personnel perspective, noting the gender imbalance of the primary teaching force and that male teachers, although the minority, have a greater chance of becoming a headteacher. Some of the women Officers are very conscious of the unequal power relations within their own working environment, where most of the Office staff are women but the Director and all four Assistant Directors are male, and where even Advisor A observes that:

"It's very much the white, middle class men who are making the policy decisions." (Advisor A)

Most Officers are aware that 'equity' is one of the core values of 'Trentshire' County Council, and recognise the emphasis on the 'fair' distribution of entitlements as a basis for legislation and policies. There is general support for 'Trentshire's' principle of 'mainstreaming' equality as a value underpinning the work of all Services, but a lack of clarity over message and leadership. Several Officers comment on the confused plethora of policies and guidance materials projected by

⁷ Section 11 refers to the part of the 1966 Local Government Act which provided for the Home Office to make grants to local authorities towards costs for people working to meet the special or additional needs of pupils of New Commonwealth origin.

'Trentshire', with some admitting their own uncertainties. Education Officer B explains that when he first arrived in 'Trentshire' he found it difficult to discern what the message actually was:

"Coming into the LEA is coming into what appears to be a great amorphous mass. It's not been easy to single out specific areas of policy which inform my work, or to identify the ways in which different services sit with each other." (*Education Officer B*)

Advisor A, who has worked in 'Trentshire' far longer, makes a similar point, and the question of how the various services 'sit with each other' on equality issues is frequently mentioned; with Officers referring to separate initiatives delivered through the Multicultural Education Service (for 'race'/ethnicity issues); the Human Resources Team (for employment issues); for Children's Services (for social inclusion and inclusion). This is largely a reflection of 'Trentshire' LEA's organisational structure, which permitted services to develop as semi-autonomous business units, complicating the coherent delivery of cross-cutting issues such as equality – a growing problem as the Authority attempts to tackle the implications of the Macpherson Report and the social inclusion agenda.

There is a general lack of awareness of who leads on equality within 'Trentshire' LEA, which some interpret as a lack of standing given to equality issues in the Authority. Several make the point that the emphasis in 'Trentshire' is frequently on getting paper policies in place, rather than developing strategies for supporting implementation and effecting change. As Service Manager E notes:

"I think the paper policy is sound, but I think how it is perceived, how it is managed, is quite a different thing." (*Service Manager E*)

Her remark highlights the link between understanding of purpose and successful implementation, and my next chapter considers Officer understanding of what equality policies are intended to achieve.

Chapter 12 WHAT ARE WE PROMOTING? OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF EQUALITY

“Equally is not a fact. It’s kind of an opinion, so we all have different ideas.” (*Advisor A*)

This chapter explores Officer perceptions of what ‘Trentshire’ equality policies are aiming to achieve in terms of purpose, focus and process. Conceptions of what inequality is, how it is constructed and whether it is important, will influence conception of how it can be reduced. I start with Advisor A’s apposite comment since the interviews reveal a range of different conceptual positions and understandings of equality terminologies.

Conceptions of equality

The starting point for most Officers in interview was the dominant ‘equal opportunities’ tradition. ‘Equal access’, ‘equality of opportunity’ and ‘equal treatment’ emerge as key strands, though some perceive them as separate and others apparently conflate them. Education Officer B makes a distinction, seeing access as centring on provision, and *opportunity* on enabling, claiming that:

“In a sense access is a negative statement, isn’t it?
Whereas *opportunity* is a positive statement.”
(*Education Officer B*)

Others distinguish between the comparatively straightforward tasks of offering equal access or making equal provision across ‘Trentshire’; and the more problematic one of ensuring genuine equality of opportunity:

“It’s very easy to say that ‘everyone’s got an equal opportunity to do this’, but how do you actually ensure that they have?” (*Service Manager D*)

Opinion seems generally to be that offering access to opportunities is important, but the key issue is to ensure they are taken up - a view well illustrated by Advisor B, who also raises the issue of how to react when those who we think should avail themselves of opportunities fail to do so:

“And I think the sad thing, and this to me is where equal opportunities goes wrong, is if you love the opera and you want to go, and you can’t, then I think that’s an equal opportunities problem. If you don’t know what opera is, then I think that’s even worse, in a sense because you’ve never been offered it. But if you’ve been offered it, and you don’t like it, then I don’t think it should be rammed down your throat.....And I think that’s my overall view of equal opportunities - that you should give everybody the chance, but if they then don’t take that opportunity, then I think there comes another stage. I think it’s the ‘O’ that’s the important one. Everybody tends to go on about the ‘equal, equal, equal’ all the time, but the opportunity can be given, and some kids don’t want that opportunity.” (*Advisor B*)

She goes on to explore – inconclusively - the question of whether responsibility for ensuring opportunities are taken up should rest with Officers or the individual:

“Now should I be saying, ‘Hilary, here is an opportunity, what you do with it is up to you’, or should I say, ‘Hilary, here is an opportunity, I am going to *make* you do it’? Help me with that one!” (*Advisor B*)

Education Officer E makes a broadly similar point about provision and take up, though not agreeing with the concept of enforcement which the word ‘*make*’ implies. For her the crux of the matter is to give pupils, including those with special educational needs, the confidence

and necessary tools to enable them to access and engage with the opportunities offered. Advisor A takes this a stage further by extending 'equal opportunities' to the whole school community, seeing 'making sure there's equal access for everyone' as the first stage towards a more inclusive aim of:

“...making sure that *all* the pupils, and *all* the staff, *all* the parents – *all* the members of the school are engaged in what goes on in the school.” (*Advisor A*)

Several Officers discuss the concept of 'equal treatment', with some clearly uncomfortable with it as a component of equality policy. Some prefer the term 'fair treatment', but their point is still the same – can *equal* treatment exist in practice? Education Officer B gives an illustration from a school he deals with:

“There are parallel groups of Y5 children, where one group has had the same teacher, good relationships with the teacher, but the other group of the same age, equal mix of ability, has had, I think five different teachers; as a result of which the discipline problems have increased; as a result of which there has been more exclusion from that class - formal exclusion and internal exclusion, and indeed academic exclusion. There's no equality of treatment from that point of view. Not at all.” (*Education Officer B*)

The difficulty for several Officers is that their role requires them to enforce statutory procedures designed to ensure equal treatment, even though they themselves believe the concept philosophically unattainable and liable to strengthen existing inequalities. Education Officer A gives examples of 'unequal' treatment from her experience in implementing school admissions procedures, criticising legislation designed to ensure equally fair admissions procedures for all pupils, which she feels in practice give advantage to middle class parents:

“And all this whole thing about freedom to choose which school your children go to. I know it's rubbish,

and they only have a right to express a preference, but there's a real problem in having a government which says you have a right to choose, but operates a system whereby you only have a right to choose if you know how to work the system and you can afford to transport your child to whichever school you can get them into. That's not equal opportunities!"

(Education Officer A)

Education Officer E makes a similar point about the use of the statementing process for giving additional support and resources to pupils with special educational needs:

"Yes, I am aware that in Trentshire we've got some parents who fight to get their children statemented, and certainly when the LEA feels they shouldn't, so I was just wondering whether it really is a fair process. I'm wondering whether it's the preserve of the middle class whites." *(Education Officer E)*

Education Officer B expresses the dilemma of whether to be 'fair' to a single child if this is at the expense of the majority, an issue which frequently engages Officers who can find themselves mediating between parents and headteachers on the rights of individual cases. He takes an example from the exclusion of pupils with disruptive behaviour, pointing out there are two angles to fair treatment and a dilemma over whose rights to uphold:

"The first angle is the equal rights of other children in the class, but on the other hand the rights of the excluded child in terms of his or her basic right to education." *(Education Officer B)*

Education Officer A highlights the same issue from a different perspective. She has the task of finding new school places for excluded pupils, which she finds problematic, even with schools which claim a welcoming and 'inclusive' ethos:

“...but the reality is we don’t want Joe Bloggs if Joe Bloggs is going to be disruptive in class.” (*Education Officer A*)

Service Manager D makes a similar point from her Special Educational Needs perspective:

“I met one of our headteachers who said that she believes in all children being in school, but after five minutes said, ‘I want this child removed from this school because his behaviour is off the wall.’ And I said, ‘Hang on a minute, you said you believe in all children being in school, and now you say he’s got to go or else’.” (*Service Manager D*)

The concept of equal outcomes prompts considerable discussion, with several Officers voicing concerns over what they perceive as ‘trying to make everyone the same’. Education Officer E explores the ‘huge dilemma’ between equal treatment and equal outcomes, referring again to the point that offering opportunities is not enough:

“I think it’s this dilemma between treating people equally and actually giving them the strategies they need to have access to all the opportunities that are around. So treating people equally, or all groups equally, will not lead to equal outcomes, if that’s what we are aiming to do - which I think it has to be if you are following an equal opportunities policy to the nth degree. Or does it?” (*Education Officer E*)

She suggests – though questions her own thinking - that equal outcomes is the logical aim of an equal opportunities policy, a view which others would clearly reject. Education Officer B sees equal outcomes as contrary to ‘valuing the individual’, arguing that:

“And equal outcomes implies - doesn’t equal outcomes imply that every child is the same and what we are aiming for is the same type of child being churned out at the end of the process, with no regard

to the individual achievements and abilities of that particular person? 'Equal outcomes' doesn't really value the individual, does it?" (*Education Officer B*)

Education Officer A has similar views, pointing out that:

"Kids are always going to be different in what they produce, so you are always going to have differentiation by outcome." (*Education Officer A*)

Her point is that children are individuals and should not be stereotyped into groups with expected behaviours. Several Officers explore the tensions inherent in offering individuals different treatments, and there is very little evidence that Officers are making what Advisor A regards as a common misunderstanding, 'talking about equal as though it means the same'. In general the interviewees declare themselves in favour of policies based on difference and diversity, though displaying a far greater critical awareness of those stressing similarities. Some, including Service Manager E who feels that the 'Trentshire' policy 'doesn't actually focus on equality of treatment', but 'goes on the recognition of difference', appear to perceive these approaches as binary opposites, but for Education Officer C the alternatives are not 'cut and dried', but depend on 'which scenario you are in'. Clearly for her the 'scenario' relates to time as well as place, since she makes a comparison with the equal pay campaigns of her early employment experiences in the early 1970s:

"When equal opportunities first emerged as an issue, with the legislation, that was what it was about, treating people the same, because people weren't."
(*Education Officer C*)

Service Manager B, blanketing all schools together, claims that they *all* still think of equality 'as making everyone the same, or lowering expectations', when she thinks that they should be valuing difference; but Education Officer B considers that recognition of difference is

something which 'Trentshire' schools tend to do quite well (though he adds that personally he would be happier to say 'celebration of difference'). Service Manager D puts the whole debate into the context of her work with children with special educational needs, arguing that children with learning difficulties should be valued for themselves, not seen as problems because they are unable to reach the 'same' standards as others:

"They want them to be the same. It's like these children with learning difficulties. They expect them, and parents do too, to be exactly the same as everyone else in school – whatever 'exactly the same' happens to be, their little picture of what they want everyone to be. There's nothing wrong with having learning difficulties, and that child might have those learning difficulties all their life – it doesn't mean that they are any less valuable to society or to the school. It's trying to get the message through that it's not about catching up so they have the same reading age, it's about enabling them to lead a full, active and valued life." (*Service Manager D*)

Advisor A, who defines difference as 'looking at where people's starting points are at', makes a similar argument:

"The more that an institution promotes difference, celebrates difference of all sorts, the more likely it is that children will be more comfortable with their own difference." (*Advisor A*)

but Education Office D strikes a note of moral caution. She starts by explaining what she understands by the term:

"My belief is that it's a celebration of people being different and having an awareness of people being different... And different treatment – now that implies to some people a negative thing, in that you are identifying people to be different, but as an individual

that's what I want. I'm not a number – you know, that old cliché – but I've got blonde hair, blue eyes, you've got brown hair – it's as basic as that." (*Education Officer D*)

but moves on to express her concern that the situation can be 'twisted to suit different people's arguments':

"I think if you don't have that awareness you are edging towards, well, a society which says you've got to have blonde hair and blue eyes – it's a very dangerous thing to assume." (*Education Officer D*)

Whether or not 'difference' is really valued within 'Trentshire' is raised by some of the women interviewed, who are keen to describe their own experiences. Service Manager B speaks about the culture within the County Council, which she sees as expecting all managers to conform to the same, male-defined behaviours:

"Women and men senior to me and at the same grade as me say, 'I don't notice gender difference' and I say to the men 'I don't know how you can be a manager – an effective manager – and say that. How can you manage people and not recognise that we are different? When I come into a meeting with you, I'm different. I behave differently, talk in different ways.' They are all into this, 'But I don't think of you as a woman!' Sounds stupid, but they feel really proud of themselves for saying they don't notice any difference. There is so much research that women think differently and they think I'm being sexist when I say that." (*Service Manager B*)

Service Manager C, speaking from a personnel perspective, acknowledges that the 'Trentshire' culture is 'very management led' – which in effect means white, middle-class male – and explains the vision behind 'managing diversity' as:

“Trying to shift the balance to employees saying this is what I need because of who I am.” (*Service Manager C*)

Several officers discuss inclusion and how it relates to the equality debate - there is general consensus that it is a key part of that debate rather than a separate agenda, but confusion over its place. Is it, as Advisor A claims it should be, ‘another word for equality’? In spite of Education Officer E’s conclusion that inclusion is ‘something we are aiming to achieve’ and ‘the equal opportunities policy the vehicle’, I will treat inclusion as an approach, and consider it in my next section.

The aims and focus of equality policies

Several Officers commented on the focus of policies and whether they should be separate or generic. Most favour a single generic policy, though presenting different arguments - for instance Education Officer B, speaking from his experience in trying to apply separate bullying and racial harassment policies, argues for a generic policy ‘because there is so much informing from one aspect to another, isn’t there?’ He favours ‘a single policy that covers everything’, arguing that for the ‘victim’ the specific focus of discrimination is less important than the overall effect on them as a person:

“Ultimately an event which deprives somebody of an equal opportunity is an equal opportunities event. It’s not a racial event, or a class event, or a disability event. It may be sponsored or motivated by a racial problem or an ethnic problem.” (*Education Officer B*)

Education Officer D also argues for a single policy because, ‘the principles are the same, the principle of equality’, but takes a different view on the relevance of the site of discrimination:

“So I feel that the policy itself should be single, but inevitably discrimination happens in a single area, and that’s where the magnifying glass needs to be.” (*Education Officer D*)

Advisor C similarly distinguishes between a single equality statement of principles and different 'detailed issues', arguing that 'some of the issues of integrating children with learning and physical difficulty are quite different from some of the gender ones'. However, as Advisor A points out, the theoretical argument in favour of a generic policy is constrained by the legal requirement for schools to have a separate identifiable race equality policy.

Some Officers raise the issue of groups not covered by the suite of specific policies, and thus excluded through being rendered invisible. Education Officer B, Advisor C and Service Manager B all mention Travellers who they consider subject to blatant discrimination and open hostility; Advisor B feels gifted and talented children are frequently forgotten because their 'disadvantage' is different, saying:

"So if they are perceived not to be making the grade, then that's fine. So I suppose it's like the 'Weakest Link'. If you are the 'Weakest Link', then that's fine, we'll give you equal opportunities. But if you are the strongest link then you had better not have any equal opportunities. Now, there's one for you!" (*Advisor B*)

Education Officer A feels particularly strongly about class, which runs as a theme throughout her whole interview:

"I don't know how you could address the inequality there because it's, it's endemic. There's a prejudice there which is an unspoken one, and which I don't think equal opps. has caught up with quite yet. Class barriers are much more apparent than the racial ones. We are not allowed to be racist now, but we can still be class conscious." (*Education Officer A*)

Advisor B comments both on the dilemmas of deciding who is 'underprivileged', and of the dangers of stereotyping against perceived 'norms', echoing some of the issues Education Officer D raised in her interview:

“And if you recognise their differences – now, again I’ve got a real problem with this one, because if you say to me, ‘I recognise that group as underprivileged, therefore...’, but I may not view that group as underprivileged. I may view another group as underprivileged. So who decides who is underprivileged? What criteria are you using? If you are black you must be underprivileged? Is that right? Not necessarily!” (*Advisor B*)

The solution to this dilemma is seen by some to be a focus on the individual. Service Manager D uses her experience in special education, where pupils have their own individual learning plans, to argue that this philosophy should be adopted more widely:

“All children have educational needs. *All* children. Some children have special educational needs. And at sometime in their school career kids will find difficulty with what they are doing whether it’s calculus or whatever - do they still do that? I don’t know! But I can’t see that they are any different. I think that all children’s needs should be met individually. Because they are all different, and they’ve all got their own set of needs, whether it’s because of speech or language difficulty, finding it hard to grasp a particular issue in maths, they’ve all got their problems.” (*Service Manager D*)

A broadly similar point is made by Service Manager C, speaking about employees rather than pupils:

“I think that’s the thing - we are talking about individuals. We are not talking about whether you are black or white, disabled or non-disabled or whatever, we are talking about recognition of individual differences, as well as groups.” (*Service Manager C*)

Officers also comment on their perceptions of the ideal approach to combating inequalities, mostly drawing a clear distinction between policy and action – or as Advisor C puts it, between ‘policy as principle’ and practice, claiming that:

“Your practice is very much for you to decide what you do and how you do it.” (*Advisor C*)

Service Manager C, who declares herself in favour of a generic policy statement, argues that action plans should have a separate and distinct focus since each might require a different practical approach:

“I think what needs to be separate, what needs to be focused, is what we do about it. So the policy about inclusion and everyone being valued for what they can offer is one thing, but in terms of *actions* needs to be separate, what we do about the fact that we haven’t got a very reflective mix in terms of ethnicity, what we do about the senior people at the top all being male, what we do about the lack of people with disabilities, is different, but I’m still in favour of a very inclusive *value* statement that we value you wherever you come from, whatever background you’ve got, but we need to differentiate between policy and action plans.” (*Service Manager C*)

But what approach do ‘Trentshire’ Officers take - are they relying on procedures, or taking a more radical approach of challenging systems and structures? The issue of how best to effect change is explored further in Chapter 15, but the question is relevant here too because it underpins perceptions of equality policy. Most would appear to agree with Education Officer C when she says:

“It’s actually about re-educating people, and I feel it’s about changing and shifting cultures.” (*Education Officer C*)

Service Manager D makes clear her belief that it is the school rather than the individual who has to change, and that her task is to challenge institutional structures:

“Yes, it’s about challenge and change...how we need to change as an institution to enable people to access what we can offer. There’s still too much emphasis on children changing rather than the establishment changing.” (*Service Manager D*)

Service Manager B gives an example from practice – without actually explaining how she managed to re-educate the Head and parents:

“We’ve got a school at the moment – a rural school in an affluent area that happens to have some settled Travellers. The attitude of the parents is awful and it’s resulted in a child behaving quite badly because of it. The school want to focus on something compensatory for the child, whereas it’s the whole context of the community and the school that’s creating the problem. The Head, being very well meaning says, ‘What help can we give this poor child?’ But the child doesn’t have the problem! She’s got parents coming in saying, ‘I don’t want my children mixing with this Traveller’, and the school aren’t dealing with this – just being very frightened.”

(*Service Manager B*)

Service Manager A puts this same debate into the context of her Service’s work in supporting bilingual children, and notes that schools vary in their approaches:

“One school will see their aim as ‘we’ve got to get these poor little things up to this standard’. You can go into another where you’ve got one set of staff thinking this, and the other, more radical, staff wanting to change systems.” (*Service Manager A*)

She makes the point that many schools find the self-scrutiny inherent in a radical approach an uncomfortable experience:

“It’s the ‘impacting on us rather than doing something for them’ approach of antiracism which some people find difficult to cope with because it challenges structures.” (*Service Manager A*)

and goes on to describe the perceived sensitivities of the antiracist approach within ‘Trentshire’ – and to declare it as, for her, preferable to a ‘weaker’ multicultural approach:

“We are not going over totally to antiracist education in ‘Trentshire’... That would soon fall foul of Members and right-wing organisations and I wouldn’t go down that line. But I think we need to show that we are much stronger than merely ‘doing things for these poor people’ which is what multicultural education implies.” (*Service Manager A*)

Service Manager B adopts what can best be described as a ‘covert radical solution’ to similar dilemmas, declaring her personal commitment to an antiracist approach, but accepting that ‘we have to be political’ and claiming that ‘Trentshire’ Members do not want to use the term ‘antiracist’. Her solution is to:

“Try to do everything we can to be antiracist without saying it, to focus on changing the organisation, changing a school, fundamentally.” (*Service Manager B*)

For several Officers the preferred approach is inclusive, grounded in diversity and centred on the needs of the individual, though ‘inclusion’ seems to have acquired a slightly different meaning to many in ‘Trentshire’:

“There is the tendency to see inclusion as something to do very much with SEN, and I think that therefore reduces it, the whole idea.” (*Advisor A*)

Education Officer E, who is developing 'Trentshire's' strategy for inclusive education has struggled to work out the conceptual relationship between 'equality' and 'inclusion', but wonders whether this is an essential step towards successful implementation:

"Yes, I really do struggle with it, and at the end of the day I'm getting to the point of feeling that I want to be practical rather than theoretical and do we have to resolve this? And if we are having difficulty resolving it, does it not mean that they are so closely allied, that perhaps it's not worth trying to define the difference. What are we going to gain by trying to define the difference? Is it going to move the people out there forward?" (*Education Officer E*).

However, she goes on to give a practical reason why a solution to her dilemma would be helpful:

"At the end of the day I don't want to have to ask schools to write an Inclusion Policy when they've got an Equal Opportunities Policy which would seem to cover the main issues." (*Education Officer E*)

bringing us back to the key question of how Officers see the aims of equality policies. LEA Officers have both to interpret and ensure compliance with existing policies, and to draft policy guidance for schools, but if they are uncertain of what the equality policies are trying to do, and are unclear on terminologies, how can they produce guidelines which will be effective in promoting change? My next section observes Officers as they set about producing a new equality policy for schools [Appendix 10], describing the conflicts - both conceptual and managerial - encountered in the process.

SCENARIO A: Producing a new equality policy for schools

The timescale: Spring 2002 to the present

The issue: The 'Trentshire' equality policies need to be revised to reflect new legislative requirements (the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act and the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act) and the LEA's Strategy for Inclusive Education [Appendix 9].

The key players:

On stage:

- Members of TEEAG, the 'Trentshire' Education Equality Action Group
- Assistant Director (Children's Services)
- Senior Managers within Children's Services, including Service Manager A and Service Manager F⁸

In the wings:

- Development Officer for Corporate Human Resources (who leads on the implementation of the Council's Best Value Review of Equality action plan)
- Assistant Director (Strategic Planning)
- Advisor A

Dialogue and action:

Scene 1: April 2002

Appearing in this scene are:

- Assistant Director (Children's Services)
- Service Manager A
- Service Manager F
- myself

The Assistant Director (Children's Services), who has responsibility for the implementation of the LEA's inclusion strategy and for meeting

⁸ Service Manager F is a white male in his fifties who heads the 'Trentshire' Educational Psychology Service

the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, realises that the current 'Trentshire' equality policies for schools need revising. He asks two of his Senior Officers (Service Managers A and F) to revise the existing policies [Appendices 2, 7, 8] and conflate them into a single generic equality policy reflecting the new statutory requirements, and sends a note round the Education Service explaining that the 'Equal Opportunities' Policy is being revised. I receive a copy, and remind those drafting the new policy of the Chief Executive's request to 'move away from thinking about *equal opportunities* and start talking about *diversity*', pointing out that this is compatible with the principle of inclusion.

In response I receive the following critical note from Service Manager F, which he also copies to the Assistant Director (Children's Services):

"I must say that I am really struggling with this one as I wrestle with the drafting of a policy framework for schools. 'Managing diversity' has to be wrong - there is no onus to do something positive about difference or discrimination. 'Valuing diversity' is better, but what do we include in 'diversity'? Behaviour difficulties? Perhaps this is the only example of 'Managing diversity' ever being appropriate! 'Celebrating diversity' may suffer from the same over-inclusiveness - conversations with the parents of a profoundly learning-disabled baby might reasonably be cut short with the use of such language. Notice that my two examples are drawn from the SEN field and it may just be that 'diversity' was never intended to reference this group.

The difficulty with having a 'policy for promoting equality in education' is that we are not equal and

never will be so why promote it? So what do we mean by equality? The dictionary says its the condition of being equal. I can see that DfES is keen on this, judging by their insistence on cranking just about all children up to Level 4 but, for sane folks, surely it must be about ensuring we do all we reasonably can to enable children to access high quality educational experiences, regardless of any learning, cultural or other difference. The emphasis should be on what adults do to make this access a reality, which must include an examination of how our motivations and prejudices as adults can, and often do, affect successful learning outcomes in children.

So I've come back to that word 'opportunity'. The must-dos from government are of real benefit in the long term in this case. Having to do it will provide schools firstly with the external control, then the growing internalisation of actions, then attitudinal shift, as it becomes part of the woodwork. Hopefully, schools can become, if they are not already, a positive model for the communities they serve.

Thanks, Hilary, for opening this up for debate.”

I respond, emphasising the conceptual similarities between inclusion, to which he seems genuinely committed, and ‘managing diversity’, and refer him to the ‘Index of Inclusion’ where ‘organising support for diversity’ is identified as a key dimension for developing inclusive schools (Booth et al., 2000, p.35). Service Manager F does not reply.

Scene 2: April 2002

Appearing in this scene are:

- myself

- Service Manager A
- Development Officer for Corporate Human Resources
- Assistant Director (Strategic Planning)

In the wings:

- Assistant Director (Children's Services)

I seek advice on whether or not it is appropriate for Service Manager F to 'open up a debate' on an issue which has been corporately decided by 'Trentshire' Members and the Chief Executive. I speak to the Development Officer for Corporate Human Resources who expresses concern that Officers in the Education Service might want to produce policies for schools which do not reflect the corporate statement. I consult Service Manager A as Chair of TEEAG, and we refer the matter to the Assistant Director (Strategic Planning) who supervises the work of TEEAG. His response is unequivocal:

"Managing diversity is our corporate policy so we can have all the debate that we like, but managing diversity is what we shall do." (*Assistant Director - Strategic Planning*)

In the meantime, the Assistant Director (Children's Services) sends a note supporting Service Manager F in his criticism of the concept of 'managing diversity', and firmly endorsing an 'equal opportunities' approach.

Scene 3: June 2002

Appearing in this scene are:

- Members of TEEAG
- Assistant Director (Strategic Planning)

'Noises off' from Assistant Director (Children's Services)

Service Manager A decides to refer the draft policy to TEEAG to ensure that it is considered against the corporate framework; TEEAG consider it fails to reflect the principles of diversity endorsed by the Chief Executive. They also raise concerns that individual Service

Managers were asked to write a policy on behalf of the whole Department, noting in their minutes:

“TEEAG regrets their lack of involvement with drafting the policy, particularly given their role as ‘equality champions’ for the Department. Whilst no-one disputes the right for A and F to advise on their own professional areas, we feel there needs to be wider involvement and input, e.g. to sharpen the sections on staffing issues.”

Assistant Director (Strategic Planning) reads the meeting notes, and persuades the Assistant Director (Children’s Services) to let TEEAG redraft the policy before it is sent out to schools for consultation.

Scene 4: August 2002

Appearing in this scene are:

- Members of TEEAG
- Service Manager B
- Advisor A
- myself

Invited, but absent: Service Manager F

Service Manager A convenes a group of Officers – including me - with experience of writing policy guidance and we agree to produce a pack of guidance material for schools, ‘Making Equality a Reality’ [Appendix 11], although some argue that providing schools with model policies allows them to rubber-stamp an ‘off the peg’ model without really engaging with the issues required for implementation. A key part of our revision of Service Manager F’s draft is to strengthen references to ‘recognition of difference’ and ‘valuing diversity’, and to highlight the belief that inclusion is not a separate ‘package’ for handling special needs pupils, but that:

“Inclusive principles should be part of all equality policies, in line with recent government and

‘Trentshire’ guidance, and should be a driving force in all other school policies” [Appendix 11].

However, we are not starting with a blank sheet, and need to strike a balance between introducing new emphases and providing a semblance of continuity - this will be one of several new policy initiatives for schools to consider, and although we are anxious to provide documents that are sufficiently challenging to provoke thought and promote action, we are also concerned that they are not daunted into panic or inaction. So in practice we retain the bulk of the existing policy documents, and focus our attention on the guidance notes [Appendix 11]. We send the draft materials to the Assistant Director (Children’s Services) for his approval.

(To be continued...)

Reviewing the performance:

Positive progress in this scenario was hampered by the lack of clarity and substance in the Chief Executive’s remarks as reported in the ‘Trentshire’ County Council Newsletter. Those who already had an understanding of equality terminology appreciated their significance, but others evidently did not, and even when the distinction was explained had difficulty accepting ‘managing diversity’ as relevant to children with special educational needs. In part, their objection was in the use of the verb ‘managing’, which was considered too dictatorial; the draft policy [Appendix 11] compromises by using the phrase ‘managing for diversity’, taken from the Audit Commission Report, ‘Equality and Diversity’ (Audit Commission, 2002a, p.10).

Another problem highlighted by the scenario is the extent to which the draft policy for schools should be grounded in ‘Trentshire’s’ corporate Diversity Statement. Schools are anyway entitled to set their own policies, but it seemed to several Officers, myself included, that the model offered by the LEA should reflect the ‘official’ Council viewpoint. Other Service Managers disagreed, arguing for

philosophical perspectives they consider more appropriate to the specific requirements of the 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act and the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act. There is tension here between Children's Services' Officers operating from within a 'welfarist' framework based on their professional experience and those operating within a 'managerialist' framework requiring that policies should follow agreed policy standards. This tension underpins Scenario A, where Officers found that writing policy requires a compromise between personal viewpoints, the corporate political agenda and the pragmatic need for continuity, reflecting Ball's view of policy texts as 'the product of compromises' and 'typically the cannibalised products of multiple (but circumscribed) influences and agendas' (Ball, 1994, p.16).

Commentary

The evidence presented in this chapter speaks strongly of 'Trentshire' Officers' commitment to promoting 'equality'. They are aware – critically in some cases – of equality issues impacting on their own service areas, but are less aware of underlying conceptual frameworks, and have tended to formulate their own conceptions and working definitions of equality. The varying versions of policy documents in circulation and the organisational context of 'Trentshire' LEA give Officers a high degree of discretion in interpreting policy within the demands of their individual roles.

Interview evidence confirms that within 'Trentshire' LEA the dominant discourse is the liberal 'equal opportunities' framework, grounded in the principles of 'fairness' – unsurprising given the literature evidence that 'equal opportunities' is the traditional approach of local government and national legislation (Weiner, 1985, p.5) - and thus my starting point for analysis is Jewson and Mason's model of conceptions of equality (Jewson and Mason, 1992, p.312) [Table 7.1]. Most 'Trentshire' LEA Officers would probably place themselves firmly in the 'liberal' column, identifying in particular with its emphasis

on 'fair procedures' such as equal access and equal treatment, and would also identify with its aim of 'justice being seen to be done' - although some argue strongly that equal treatment does not lead to 'justice' for those who are already disadvantaged, and that 'equal treatment' policies are inherently unfair. Several are deeply critical of the notion that 'equal means the same' which some claim to be prevalent in schools, echoing findings from Cline et al. whose research claims that most teachers think children should be treated the same (Cline et al., 2002, p.101). Comments made by Education Officer A and Service Manager D mirror criticisms in the literature (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p.7; Arnot et al., 1998, p.84) that neo-liberal post-ERA legislation – such as the admissions legislation and special needs statementing process they administer – has allowed the 'haves' to escape from the 'have nots'; for them the obligation to support, and justify to complainants, procedures which they regard as flawed is an evident source of stress.

Some Officers would apparently place themselves in the 'radical' column of the Jewson and Mason model [Table 7.1], looking for opportunities to challenge the status quo. Service Manager B, together with others working on the school improvement agenda, speaks in favour of targeting to support improvements – reflecting the argument given in the literature for 'equal outcomes' (Smith and Noble, 1995, p.18). Others, particularly those with individual casework roles such as Service Manager F, clearly struggle with the equal outcomes approach; preferring to see an emphasis on the individual rather than the group – a preference which encompasses both the 'equal opportunities' approach and 'inclusion', based on recognition of difference.

Although most Officers claim to support an approach based on recognition of difference, their comments chiefly centre on terminology - whether to 'celebrate', 'value', 'recognise' or 'manage' diversity – rather than on discussion of difference, although Education

Officer C, Advisor B and Service Manager F explore issues surrounding the construction of difference and the danger of setting norms which exclude the 'other', whether those without blonde hair and blue eyes or those not attaining the Level 4 threshold at Key Stage 2. Some Officers offer examples of the conflicts and dilemmas inherent in 'valuing diversity', between championing the rights of individual children or community groups, or challenging instances of disruptive behaviour or exclusive practices of certain headteachers – examples which both reflect Fraser's argument for recognition of difference (Fraser, 1997, p.204) and highlight yet again the individual / group dilemma. There is considerable debate on inclusion, which some Officers regard as part of the wider diversity agenda while others clearly do not - Service Manager F, for one, argues that diversity was never intended to reference pupils with special needs. Others, such as Education Officer E, struggle with its conceptual basis; she apparently accepts the 'social model' (Mason and Rieser, 1994, p.20), but cannot place it within a wider theoretical framework.

'Trentshire' Officers work within a discourse which champions 'equity' - distributive justice - as one of the Council's four core values, and this is evident from the interview emphasis on 'equal access' and 'equal treatment'. However the concept of 'equal opportunity' presents problems to some; for example, Advisor B juggles distributional notions of 'provision' against relational notions of 'take up' based on ability and power, reflecting Young's argument that 'opportunity' is a concept of enablement rather than a good (Young, 1990, p.25). There are other examples of relational justice, with discussion of groups being oppressed through marginalisation, such as the Traveller community, or rendered powerless by being outside the middle class 'Trentshire' norm.

The interview evidence confirms that 'Trentshire' LEA Officers are expected to uphold procedures grounded in neo-liberal legislation – such as the 'fair' admissions procedures – whilst delivering New

Labour's social inclusion and diversity agendas based on post-modern conceptions of difference. How they manage this in terms of their roles, and how they cope with the inherent tensions, are issues I explore in my next two chapters.

Chapter 13 WHAT DO WE DO?: OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE

This Chapter considers what Advisor C refers to as:

“The ‘square one issue’ of the role of the LEA and what it can be expected to do that actually influences.” (*Advisor C*)

through Officer comments about their role as players and shapers. All those interviewed feel that the LEA has a role to play in the promotion of equality, though their conceptions of that role vary.

Many comment on the balance between the key local players - Officers, schools (Heads, governors and teachers) and parents - and on the perceived level of power held by each. Education Officer D summarises her view of the relationship between the LEA and schools, and between the LEA and the ‘Trentshire’ community, giving Officers a role for policy making and monitoring, but not delivery:

“Well, we set the strategic, and then they do the operational – but we’ve got a very heavy role in ensuring, well, I think we’ve got an accountability to every child, parent, to make sure that is the case.” (*Education Officer D*)

Education Officer E also identifies a role for LEA Officers in ‘making policies’ and in ‘arranging for implementation’, giving the LEA an administrative role which Education Officer D omits, but her comments imply an *ad hoc* approach, underpinned by uncertainty:

“I think we are all struggling with these issues, in our own way, trying to make sense of them. We are all going along on a day to day basis, making policies and arranging for implementation.” (*Education Officer E*)

The Assistant Director (Strategic Planning) is more certain, judging from his remark quoted in Scenario A:

“Managing diversity is our corporate policy so we can have all the debate that we like but managing diversity is what we shall do.” (*Assistant Director (Strategic Planning)*)

His point provides a qualification to Education Officer D’s comment that ‘we set the strategic’, underlining that it is the role of Officers to deliver policies agreed by the elected Council Members. As Scenario A illustrates, LEA Officers must work within the framework of the County Council’s policies rather than devising their own.

Many of the comments raise the same dilemma – how can LEA Officers ensure the implementation of a policy which is delivered through self-managing schools? – and indicate a range of strategies as possible solutions. Advisor C, himself a seconded ‘Trentshire’ primary head, articulates the issues, firstly asking ‘Well, what does the LEA do about implementing any of its policy?’ and then wondering where the accountability for implementation actually lies. Taking his starting point that accountability rests totally with the schools, he moves on to question his own thinking:

“So the LEA thinks that diversity is important, the Members will raise funds, and those funds are then made available to the school, and the accountability is then the schools’ – or is it?” (*Advisor C*)

and concludes that the LEA has clear roles, both in providing resources and in monitoring to ensure compliance. Service Manager E takes a different view, thinking that the LEA has a ‘leadership in partnership’ role with schools, with LEA Officers taking the lead. However, she clearly regards this as an ideal rather than current ‘Trentshire’ practice, since she goes on to argue that Heads should be given less discretion and stronger leadership:

“We allow them, we allow them to decide which are the important areas. I think it’s very confusing to be a Head in ‘Trentshire’, you can choose whether you do some things or not, and I think some of the stuff is

not for choice. I think equal opps. isn't a choice."

(Service Manager E)

How Officers perceive the power balance between the LEA and its schools is revealed through their choice of language to describe their roles and behaviours, through phrases such as 'support', 'advise', 'encourage', 'offer guidance'. One explains the 'gentle persuasion' methods she perceives as common practice in 'Trentshire':

"We've always had a very 'softly softly' way of doing things. We've never said, 'This is not acceptable. This is the way things will be.' I don't know whether that's the way to do it, but coming on strong about making changes can put people's backs up." *(Service Manager D)*

The model conceived here is one where power lies with the schools, with Officers supporting them in discharging their responsibilities – a role which Education Officer B sees as limited:

"Beyond that it's very difficult for the LEA to have that much more inputIt's down to them to do it."
(Education Officer B)

Officers perceive tasks appropriate to this model as those empowering schools to deliver policies effectively, such as training Heads and governors:

"Most practically by effective training - most of all, I think, by effective governor training; because governors hold the keys ultimately to the policies within the schools; by effective headteacher training."
(Education Officer B)

or providing guidance materials and tools (which is the approach taken in Scenario A with the materials in Appendix 11):

"Well, first of all you've got to raise their awareness of the issues, provide them with background information, model policies, the tools with which they

can work to develop their own policy, make it clear that monitoring is required and that implementation of plans ought to follow that.” (*Education Officer A*)

But the accepted behaviour for contact on routine issues is to be constantly persuasive, to keep reinforcing possibilities for good practice - for instance one Officer explains her belief that the most effective process is leading by individual example:

“I think we can actually persuade, if you like, schools and educate the schools through our own good practice... And I think the Authority has to be to be a role model. If we want to influence schools we have got to be the model ourselves, haven’t we? We’ve got to be the model of good practice in things that we do.” (*Education Officer C*)

Another makes a similar point, and goes on to describe her how she tries to exert influence:

“I think the most effective way of ensuring that they do do something is to actually point out for them in every day stuff that they are doing that they can be considering issues to do with inclusion and equality.” (*Advisor A*)

This approach requires challenge – which Advisor B is careful to distinguish from the ‘critical friend’ role, which she does not regard as hers:

“I don’t see us as a critical friend at all, I see us as - well, I think the ‘critical friend’ one has probably gone. It’s challenge and support.” (*Advisor B*)

Challenge involves clearly involves questioning which can be uncomfortable and confrontational:

“The way that we can reinforce it is as we meet it, and actually confront it. I think it’s part of our Officer responsibility to make sure that we don’t turn a blind

eye to any of these issues, no matter how uncomfortable it makes us feel, and to actually confront and question things – even basic things.”

(Education Officer C)

But challenge also requires tact and diplomacy in instances where Officers are not able to direct. Education Officer B gives two detailed examples of instances where he has challenged schools over their equality practices, using phrases such as *'impress upon'* and *'prompt'* which reveal the underlying tensions in the relationship:

“I’ve heard the question asked many times, when a recommendation for an appointment has been put to a governing body at the end of the process, ‘Well, what do we know about him, what’s his family life and so on?’ Well of course that’s not a legitimate question. And at the same time in the process of shortlisting, with all the efforts being made to avoid definition of age, gender, ethnicity and so on, the first question they ask is, ‘Is this a man or woman?’ ‘And how old?’ - ‘Oh she’s too old, can’t possibly have her.’ And actually one has to speak very strongly to governing bodies, and repeatedly.....to impress on them that this cannot be a consideration during the appointments process. And it is actually very difficult because of the nature of the relationship between the LEA and the governing body.” *(Education Officer B)*

“If a child is challenging in behaviour, quite often all the other issues are actually pushed away, and one of the things that a headteacher is supposed to do before excluding a child is to review the exclusion and to ask questions. One of those questions is, ‘What is the position for this exclusion in the light of the school’s policy on equal opportunities, in terms particularly of racism, sexism, sexual orientation and

so on?’ And I don’t think yet I’ve met a headteacher who has considered those issues voluntarily, or at least who has accepted without prompting that there is an issue.” (*Education Officer B*)

Challenge also requires time, spent in persuasion or negotiation. Education Officer E describes how she spent over an hour and a half on the telephone with a Head who was unwilling to adopt the county’s inclusion policy without being promised additional funding. She did not mention who had initiated the call but there are 200 primary headteachers in ‘Trentshire’ and, should each require similar lengthy persuasion, the pressure on Education Officer E and her support assistant is unsustainable.

In a very few cases the challenge becomes intervention. Education Officer A, whose role requires her to find new school places for excluded pupils, can legally require schools to take pupils if they have space, but this direct approach is considered unusual for ‘Trentshire’, where the perception, among officers at least, is that:

“We will bend over backwards for schools” (*Service Manager D*).

The belief that this is accepted ‘Trentshire’ behaviour seems widespread, as is the perception that Officers in other LEAs are allowed to adopt a more direct style with their schools. Service Manager D described the experiences of a colleague who had moved into ‘Trentshire’ from another Authority:

“We had an Officer who came to work for us, she had actually done the same job in another LEA where there were very different attitudes to schools, and she was absolutely shocked at how we dealt with schools and what we allowed them to dictate that they would do. This was interesting, because I always thought everyone did it our way, so I was

really quite surprised when she came and said this.”

(Service Manager D)

However, she is not arguing for a more directive role for the LEA, believing that:

“Heads are grown ups. That’s what they are employed to do. Run schools. You can support, you can advise, you can monitor, but you can’t tell them what to do.” *(Service Manager D)*

Education Officer D comments on the relationship between Officers and governing bodies, and goes on to explore the relationship between individual governors and the whole body, as:

“Completely contradicting Thatcherism because it’s a *corporate* responsibility, and therefore it magnifies the fact that individual governors contribute to a whole.....but equally there has to be a culture within that group of people that respects the rights and opinions of individuals.” *(Education Officer D)*

Most discussion centred on relationships with schools, but as Education Officer D explained, Officers also have an ‘accountability to every child and parent’ in ‘Trentshire’. This can present challenges which are difficult to handle:

“We had a parent who phoned up not long ago who said ‘My child is white, we’ve lived here all our lives, he should be at the front of the queue for a statement.’ It just takes your breath away to hear that. You know that there must be people out there who think like that, but to actually hear it said – and to someone they don’t know. It’s mind blowing. And do you then start on the telephone giving them a lecture that this is not the way to do things? You know, how you respond to that is actually quite difficult.” *(Service Manager D)*

Both Service Manager D and Education Officer A clearly consider that their prime accountability is to the children and parents of 'Trentshire', and both frequently find themselves in the 'broker role', acting on behalf of parents in disputes with schools. This is an evident source of tension, as Education Officer A explains:

"Parents will ring us up and say, 'We've been to such and such a school, and they've said they are full' when we know that they are not full, and so if we put two and two together and when we go back to the school they say, 'Well, you know we couldn't; we are as good as full. We've got enough problems without taking that one in'." (*Education Officer A*)

Commentary

It would appear that most 'Trentshire' Officers see the LEA as having a leadership role, but struggle to understand how it can operate when they have no power to direct schools or external partner agencies. In Chapter 10 I surmised that, using Riley's model of modes of operation between LEAs and their schools, 'Trentshire' fell between 'interactive' and 'responsive' (Riley et al., 1999, p.31). Interview evidence suggests Officers perceive 'Trentshire' as aspiring to be 'interactive', but are uncertain how the concept of partnership working with schools should affect their own roles and behaviours. The question of how far the LEA can let schools act as individuals, or enforce standards across all 'club members' underpins much of the discussion on leadership and the relationship with schools.

Most Officers perceive 'Trentshire's' relationship with its schools in terms of the 'advocate for standards' role - how best to ensure that the education service is delivered in the way the LEA would like. In practice this role can be uncertain and cautious, with Officers using phrases such as, 'softly, softly', 'gentle persuasion', 'encourage' to describe the approach they take. The key LEA roles of 'challenge',

'support', 'intervention' and 'monitoring' (Woods and Cribb, 2001b, p.11) are familiar to 'Trentshire' Officers, who are also evidently accustomed to dealing with the resultant tensions and dilemmas – issues which I investigate in more detail in my next chapter. The style emerging here is a pragmatic one of 'leadership by negotiation', with Officers striving hard to make things work in practice, but to some it feels more 'responsive', requiring reaction to the demands of schools, who perceive Officers to be in the support role. Several Officers claim that the tensions result from 'Trentshire's' management style, and that life is easier in other LEAs who take a more directive approach with schools, but my reading of literature such as Riley's study of LEA leadership styles (Riley, 2000) suggests this is probably not the case.

Evidence suggests that 'Trentshire' Officers, whether in advisory or service delivery roles, are familiar with the six areas of tension identified by Ainscow et al.'s study of the role of LEA Advisors in implementing the government's school improvement agenda (Ainscow et al., 2000). Other than the uncertainties over leadership/support stance, which I have discussed earlier in this section, there are uncertainties of style; Officers can act with certainty in cases of non-compliance with the law; for instance Education Officer A in dealing with admissions issues, or Education Officer B in Headship appointments, but must otherwise fall back on negotiation and persuasion, which can be time-consuming and stressful.

Ainscow et al. also identify uncertainties of agenda, noting potential conflict of interest between schools and LEA (Ainscow et al., 2000, p.11). 'Trentshire' Officers, who occupy a wider range of roles, extend the sites of conflict to include the wider interests of national and local government, parents and the community. The pressure to respond to several, frequently conflicting, agendas is a source of tension which I explore more fully in my next chapter, and is particularly evident with Education Officer A and Service Manager D

whose role frequently requires them to act as 'broker' between schools and parents – a point of tension for LEAs identified by Riley [Figure 6.2] (Riley, 2000, p.61).

Some of the comments made by Officers working on behalf of individual pupils and their parents place them within the 'welfarist' conception of an LEA Officer identified by Gerwitz (Gewirtz, 2002, p.32). Amongst her identified characteristics of a 'welfarist' manager are 'decisions driven by commitment to professional standards and values' and a consultative, co-operative stance, characteristics identifiable in Education Officer E, for example. The ethos of 'Trentshire' County Council is overtly managerial, and typified by the note from the Assistant Director (Strategic Planning), but it is evident that individual Officers are driven by professional rather than managerial values.

A key strand of this Chapter has been the tensions and dilemmas inherent in the roles of 'Trentshire' Officers, and in my next Chapter I shall explore these in more depth, using both interview evidence and, in Scenario B, meeting notes and my personal observations.

Chapter 14 WHAT WE WANT TO DO BUT CAN'T: TENSIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

“The issue is about *practice*, it's not about policy really, it's about practice.” (*Advisor A*)

The picture presented by the interview evidence is one of individual Officers working hard to promote good equality practices, but feeling powerless to effect change. Advisor A's observation touches on the reason for this – if all that is required is for LEA Officers to check that schools have paper policies, then the task is comparatively straightforward, but the aim is to promote good practice, and this is more problematic since the principal responsibility rests with schools, not the LEA. In this chapter I explore how that aim is helped or hindered by the role of the LEA, charting how the uncertainties and tensions identified in my previous chapter frequently develop into constraints, and in Scenario B demonstrate why a requirement for schools to collect ethnic monitoring data on their pupils – a seemingly straightforward request – has taken 'Trentshire' Officers five years to implement.

In the uncertain and uneasy relationship between an LEA and its schools the task of ensuring that equality issues are practised is potentially fraught and the general perception of Officers is that they are constrained by the nature of the LEA's relationship with its schools from being able to make the input that they would like. The 'challenge' and 'intervention' roles identified in Chapter 11 are often conducted in a context of unequal power relations between Officers, governors and Heads. Education Officer C described the relationship as 'difficult', explaining that:

“We have such a tenuous role now with schools, almost advisors to the governing body, but it's a bit 'take it or leave it' as far as they are concerned.”
(*Education Officer C*)

Education Officer B, explaining how he has to 'impress upon' or 'prompt' headteachers and governors, identifies a further constraint on his ability to get his message across – he claims his chance of influencing a school is dependent on their previous experience with 'Trentshire' Authority, and if there have been problems in the past his task can be an uphill struggle or his advice dismissed:

"Certainly there are constraints in terms of ensuring that the governing body actually accepts your role as an Officer, and so much of that depends on what's been happening in the previous five years in terms of the history of the school, the history of the governing body, the history of relationships with LEAs. If the LEA input has been unfortunate - or is regarded by the governing body as being unfortunate - then that will taint any advice that you give." (*Education Officer B*)

As identified in Chapter 13, Officers frequently feel forced into the reactive position of only being able to actively influence once things have gone wrong within a school, a position described by Education Officer D as 'fire-fighting'. This is not considered ideal, but it is when things have gone wrong – after a bad OfSTED report, for instance – that LEA Officers usually have their best chance of working for change:

"The question arises of our role beyond the bad OfSTED report in terms of formulating an intervention plan. Maybe at that point we have the strongest ammunition to fire to ensure that policies are put in place." (*Education Officer B*)

However, even when Officers have an opportunity to support schools through invitation or intervention their options may be constrained since, as Service Manager D notes, very often situations have developed to such an extent that 'it is almost too late, almost a *fait accompli* by the time I get there'. Or Officers' ability to act may, as

Advisor C claims, be constrained by the increased delegation to schools of budget resources. Budget delegation both weakens Officers' capacity to respond to a school's request for help since they no longer have resources available to do so; and raises the expectation of purchasing schools who 'want as much as they can get'. 'Trentshire', like most Shire Counties away from London, is comparatively badly funded and has minimal available central resources, and Officers are anxious to dispel Heads' perception that improvements are only possible with additional funds from the LEA:

"We have to try.....to get Heads away from thinking that the only way it can be made positive is by putting money into it. I want to get away from that thinking."

(Education Officer E)

In spite of Officers' shared perception that the LEA's relationship with schools constrains their role, none seem clear about what that means in practice for them as individuals. One even seems unsure whether she should admit to the difficulties, and to the 'political tensions' they cause her in trying to deliver her service to schools:

"I think its different in schools because we've lost some of the ability to tell them what to do... Am I going to be quoted on this? I don't mind if I am actually!" *(Service Manager C)*

For many Officers the greatest constraints come, not from their relations with schools, but from externally imposed government agendas which leave them powerless. Officers describe both their inability as professionals to control situations, and the resultant tensions and dilemmas - well articulated by Advisor B:

"As an LEA Officer you have these problems, you have what the LEA wants you to do; you have what the school wants you to do, you have what the government wants you to do. You've got all these things coming in at you. You are then told that this is

your job, but you know from experience that actually, that doesn't feel right alongside these policies."

(Advisor B)

She also describes the personal pressures of trying to balance differing political demands from central government, from within the LEA and from 'Trentshire' schools and community, and of the need to be 'a very versatile and resilient person' to cope. Her image is of a puppet being manipulated in different directions, an image of powerlessness, of having her agenda shaped and driven without any personal involvement:

"You've got the 'masters' outside; you've got the 'masters' inside, and as an LEA Officer you've then got to go out to the 'masters' in the field. And at no time are you really sure who's pulling which strings."

(Advisor B)

She goes on to identify the tensions inherent in trying to fit equality into a government agenda which increasingly focuses on school improvement:

"I think the aim of equal opportunities, and now inclusion as well, becomes one of tension, because on the one hand schools have to have 'league tables', and we are saying 'You must come higher up those', and on the other hand they must take in anybody and everybody, equal access and deal with them appropriately." *(Advisor B)*

Other Officers note similar tensions, but not necessarily as conflict:

"Oh absolutely, it's a real pressure. Yes. Equal opportunities has got tensions pulling on all different ways on it, I think that's why it is a political hot-spot really. Because inevitably it's contradicted by other messages coming to us as an Education Authority - by standards, by targets, by league tables. But equally, I think an equal opportunities policy will encourage children to achieve, and therefore the two

should really go hand-in-hand, with equal priority.”

(Education Officer D)

Not all Officers see the external agenda in such a positive light, and two, whose roles involve dealing with parents over applications for entitlements, both feel that national legislative procedures designed to enable equal access actually constrain the possibility of fair treatment. Service Manager D explains her view that the procedures for special needs assessment limit her ability to help parents already excluded by society (who she refers to as ‘over here’):

“Talk about equal opportunities, but parents who aren’t as able, and don’t have the capacity to fight their own corner because they have difficulty finding the words, they are not confident, don’t stand a cat in hell’s chance. Parents who’ve got money and who are prepared to stand up and shout will get somewhere with a Tribunal, and they will get what they want. And it’s utterly unfair that if you are of a certain standing you will get everything, even if you can afford to pay for it, you are going to get it. But if you are over here, and your child has got the same needs and you keep quiet or you are not able to do it, or if someone can talk the talk very well and talk you round. It’s so unfair. The Tribunal is one of the most unfair things we’ve got around at the moment.”

(Service Manager D)

Education Officer A makes a similar point:

“Articulate, middle class parents in ‘Trentchester’ will pull out all the stops and jump through all the hoops, and play the game as much as they can. Your socially deprived family from the Riverside Estate probably won’t even know the system exists, and if they do they’ll probably shout their way through the

appeal and put the panel off and not get a place.”

(Education Officer A)

Both feel powerless in the face of systems they consider disadvantage parents and children who they want to support, but are unable to do so. Education Officer E – who feels parents have the ‘ultimate power’ since they can take the Authority to Tribunal in individual cases - is uncertain where she stands:

“So we are giving very mixed messages, and as an LEA it’s not possible to give a clear message. Well, we can give one message, which we thought was the right message, but now we’ve got other people cutting across that, so I’m not sure at the end of the day just what sort of rights we as an LEA will have to ensure that children are in the schools that we think they should be in. Perhaps we are not going to have any rights. Parents may have more rights than we have.” *(Education Officer E)*

There are several tensions evident in these examples: in power relations between players and the perceived loss of professional status by the LEA Officer; between a procedural conception of ‘equal access’ as distribution and the desire to do the best for the child; and between the rights of the individual child against the rights of a school not to admit them. Education Officer D picks up on this last point, and discusses the pressures on schools to focus on their position in the ‘league tables’, which she evidently finds difficult to justify:

“But doesn’t it say something when a school – say in an area of rural or urban deprivation – is seen to be not very high in the league tables but in actual fact has helped children in its community to achieve a great deal, but that school is deemed not as good.”
(Education Officer D)

Other Officers feel constrained by the lack of clarity on what constitutes 'good equality practice' in their role, noting they have not been trained on equality issues beyond their basic induction briefing, but left to develop their own working definitions and standards. Education Officer C sees the lack of consistency of message as potentially hampering the promotion of equality in schools:

"It largely depends on different services, it's not even similar across Departments. It's different between individuals. You think how it's been in this Service, with three Officers, and I would think that you've got three very different views, even within the same Service." (*Education Officer C*)

whilst Advisor C worries about the likelihood of varying practices when individual Officers have considerable discretion:

"If you are actually talking about influencing practice by your own practice and belief, there just may be more opportunities for variation there, some of it sub-conscious." (*Advisor C*)

The issue here goes beyond trying to make sense of the confused plethora of 'Trentshire' equality policies to recognition by several Officers that the various conceptual strands they contain are in tension. The 'huge dilemma' between 'equal treatment' and 'equal outcomes' noted by Education Officer E and the requirement for Service Manager D and Education Officer A to uphold 'equal treatment' legislation which they perceive as inherently unfair place a real constraint on their ability to promote a robust message on equality.

The responsibility for the lack of direction and consequent ambiguity is placed, by some Officers at least, at the door of the Council's Strategic Managers who are perceived as being largely disinterested in prioritising equality issues:

“But until we can change the attitudes of certain Senior Officers it makes everything that we are trying to do so much more difficult.” (*Service Manager A*)

“It’s a core value of the Authority, but I’m not sure that the organisation expects Lead Officers to have the same core values.” (*Service Manager E*)

Service Manager A is critical of the role played by ‘Trentshire’ County Councillors, and the tensions arising from promoting equality in a traditionally conservative administration formed a prominent thread through her interview. These may be perceived problems rather than real; she expresses concern that the Members ‘don’t want to know about equality issues’; but Councillors instigated ‘Trentshire’s’ Best Value Review of Equality and have championed targeted funding for socially deprived schools.

Several Officers comment on the ‘comfortable’, white, male, middle class culture of ‘Trentshire’ which they feel limits the possibility of real change. This is a particular issue for some of the women, who express concern over the seemingly self-perpetuating nature of what Education Officer C refers to as ‘the old boys’ school tie network’, describing it as:

“Very bad practice, it’s poor for the Authority, and it makes us limiting in what we do.” (*Education Officer C*)

Education Officer A also cites the middle class culture as a constraint in making parental guidance on education entitlements and procedures more accessible:

“It’s not helped by having middle-class articulate officers writing the booklets and everything. With the best will in the world there’s a limit to how clear and simple you can make a complicated system.” (*Education Officer A*)

For some Officers, the frustrations are intensified by a belief that there is insufficient direction on equality within 'Trentshire' County Council, where the organisational structure permits individual Departments and Services to develop their own approaches:

"We are not in a leadership or management approach that says, 'You will all do it in this way'. We don't say, 'Every committee report will address equality issues, with implications for equality in it', like some Authorities do. We are not that sort of Authority."

(Service Manager B)

Some evidently believe that Officers in LEAs with a more directive, interventionist style are better able to promote equality in schools. Service Manager A's comments on the perceived restrictions placed on 'Trentshire' Officers reflect those made by Service Manager D's colleague who had transferred from another LEA:

"It's so frustrating when you go to other Authorities and they send things out on monitoring, and give direction – and know that you can't do this." *(Service Manager A)*

Her remarks relate to ethnic monitoring, and it is to the frustrations around the introduction of ethnic monitoring in 'Trentshire' that I turn to next, using Scenario B to explore the constraints involved in this apparently straightforward task.

SCENARIO B: encouraging effective ethnic monitoring

This scenario describes the challenges faced and the actions taken by 'Trentshire' Officers working to improve ethnic monitoring practices within the LEA.

The timescale: From the mid-1990s up to the present.

The issue: To encourage 'Trentshire' schools and LEA services to collect and record information on the ethnic heritage of their pupils and to analyse it on a regular basis to identify any disparities which might be due to ethnicity and which must be addressed.

The key players:

- Members of TEEAG, the 'Trentshire' Education Equality Action Group
- Service Manager of the 'Trentshire' Multicultural Education Service (Service Manager A)
- Service Manager of 'Trentshire' LEA Schools' ICT Systems (who supports schools with data collection and record keeping)
- Myself as Development Officer (Management Information)
- Administrative staff of the 'Trentshire' LEA School Information Team (who collect statutory returns from schools)
- Assistant Director (School Effectiveness)

Off stage:

- the DfES Information Management Strategy Team
- the DfES Ethnic Minority Pupils Team

Dialogue and action:**Scene 1: The 'prequel'**

Period: prior to the start of my study in 1999

Appearing in this scene are:

- Members of TEEAG
- Assistant Director (School Effectiveness)

With 'noises off' from 'Trentshire' LEA Senior Management Team and Headteacher representatives.

The TEEAG minutes reveal an on-going struggle to promote ethnic monitoring stretching back to the early-1990s; the overwhelming impression is that ethnic monitoring has a low priority within 'Trentshire', and that 'officialdom' deems this appropriate for a predominantly white LEA. This is a period when officers are anxious not to 'upset' schools in case they opt-out of LEA control, and the TEEAG minutes hint that this is why certain Senior Managers appear reluctant to push the case for ethnic monitoring.

Agreement is eventually reached in 1997, partly because the DfEE introduce a new, but non-compulsory, section on the statutory Annual Schools' Census (ASC) for numbers of minority ethnic pupils on roll. A new Assistant Director (School Effectiveness) arrives in 'Trentshire' and is prepared to take a stronger line with schools, asking them to send ethnic background details to the LEA as part of each pupil record at Baseline Assessment and end of Key Stage 1 National Curriculum Statutory Assessment.

Scene 2: The 'Trentshire' initiative

Period: Summer 1999 to Summer 2001

Appearing in this scene are:

- Members of TEEAG
- Administrative staff of the LEA's School Information Team
- Myself as Development Officer (Management Information)

In the wings:

- Education Officers

In principle, ethnic monitoring is already established in 'Trentshire' LEA by the time this scene opens; in practice, there are considerable

gaps, particularly where schools have made incomplete returns. Where it does exist, ethnic data is generally aggregated at school level, limiting its potential for use beyond the context for which it was originally collected. Individual pupil level data is available for two cohorts only, at Baseline (pupils aged 4+) and at the end of Key Stage1 (pupils aged 7+).

This patchy picture concerns TEEAG, particularly in the post-Macpherson emphasis on racial equality, and they commission me to scrutinise the returns made for the ethnic background section of the ASC, where some schools submit figures that appear wildly inaccurate and others leave the section blank – in January 1999 1.5% of primary pupils in 'Trentshire' are unclassified, compared to the national median of 0.5% for LEAs (DfEE, 1999c). TEEAG ask Education Officers to chase up missing or erroneous returns from their 'link' schools but they are reluctant to put pressure on headteachers. As one said to me:

"It's not compulsory for schools to collect ethnic background data, so we shouldn't be chasing them. Who needs it, anyway? Is it important?"

This reluctance is mirrored by the administrative staff who collect the Key Stage 1 Pupil Record Sheets from schools, who decide not to challenge schools over incomplete forms, claiming it takes too long to chase Heads for missing data and disrupts the processing of test scores. The quest for ethnic monitoring data is thus constrained by the belief that it is more important to reduce the 'bureaucratic burden' on schools - and LEA administrative staff.

(One year interval. Action resumes with the same players in Summer 2000).

Intervention by TEEAG has brought some improvement to the quality of ASC and KS1 records; there is still not a 100% response on ethnic

monitoring at KS1, but the administrative team have introduced better quality assurance controls. One Head refuses on principle, claiming she is unhappy about 'labelling pupils' through the collection of ethnic background data, but feedback indicates that most of the 'non-completers' are objecting to the 'bureaucratic burden' of time-consuming paper-based collection processes.

The main action takes place over the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum Statutory Assessment information. 'Trentshire' LEA is asked by the DfEE to provide evidence of the proportion of pupils from each minority ethnic group attaining the threshold level (Level 4) in English and mathematics Tests in support of its bid for monies from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (DfEE, 1999b), but does not have this information. The Assistant Director (School Effectiveness) asks schools to supply the information, but the request is hindered by a badly designed proforma sent out by administrative staff, and response is poor.

Scene 3: The DfES proposals

Period: Summer 2001 to Early summer 2002

Appearing in this scene are:

- Members of TEEAG
- Service Manager A
- Service Manager of 'Trentshire' LEA Schools' ICT Systems
- Myself as Development Officer (Management Information)

Off stage:

- the DfES ⁹Information Management Strategy Team
- the DfES Ethnic Minority Pupils Team.

The action switches to preparations for the DfEE's new Pupil Level Annual Schools' Census (PLASC), which from January 2002 requires schools to collect, record and annually submit a nationally defined set

⁹ During the course of this scene the DfEE becomes the DfES

of personal background data on each individual pupil both to the LEA and DfEE. The DfEE formally consult LEAs on the proposal to include ethnic background as a compulsory category in PLASC, arguing that this is an essential management tool for raising achievement and tackling inequality of opportunity (DfEE, 2000b, p.2). However this will require every pupil to be reclassified using the 2001 national Census categories - a major task for schools which must seek self-classifications from every parent. 'Trentshire' LEA welcome the proposals as a step forward, and TEEAG propose ethnic monitoring should be presented to schools as a positive tool for identifying and eliminating any disparities which could result from 'race'/ethnicity, emphasising this is a legal requirement under the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act, and an OfSTED expectation. However, preparations are hampered by the lack of any news from the DfES on the consultation outcomes.

Enter at this stage loud 'noises off' from the Manager of 'Trentshire' Schools' ICT Systems, who is liaising with the DfES's Information Management Strategy Team over preparations for PLASC. His advice, based on erroneous messages from his national network of ICT contacts, is that schools should start reclassifying their pupils straightaway; some 'Trentshire' Heads get to hear of this, and are critical of the LEA's seeming incompetence in not advising them of this major task.

(Ten month interval. Action resumes with the same players in Spring 2002)

When the DfES finally publish its guidance for the collection and recording data on pupils' ethnic background, it gives LEAs a clearly defined role in providing leadership and support to their schools (DfES, 2002, p.1) but comparatively little flexibility. LEAs have the option to extend the national Census categories to reflect local community groups, and this causes some conflict in 'Trentshire' - one

group of Officers, led by Service Manager A and acting reportedly on advice from the DfES Ethnic Minority Pupils Team, argue for the use of the existing broad categories; another, led by the ICT Manager, reportedly on advice from the DfES Information Strategy Team, argue for the use of an extended list of 'all known' categories. The 'Trentshire' Traveller Education Support Service lobby the DfES for additional Traveller categories.

A Working Group of four 'Trentshire' Officers is established to co-ordinate the implementation process in schools and decides to use the standard Census categories in 'Trentshire', largely for pragmatic reasons of cost – using the national standard means we can download materials from the DfES website, and we use the DfES Guidance note (DfES, 2002) to develop a package of advice to schools, and run a workshop session for local headteachers in conjunction with the DfES Ethnic Minority Pupils Team.

The action closes. The returns are successfully collected as part of January 2003 Pupil Level Annual Schools' Census.

Reviewing the performance:

The action in this scenario has been spread over several years, and although the main issue – the quest to encourage 'Trentshire' schools to collect and record information on the ethnic heritage of their pupils, and to analyse it on a regular basis to see what patterns emerge – has remained constant, the drivers for action have changed. In the early years the issue was local, championed by a group of officers with commitment but lacking any political 'clout', who tried to take things forward in small steps, but made limited progress until the arrival of a Senior Manager who shared their commitment, was a newcomer 'untainted' by the previous failed attempts, and had the authority to make high-level decisions. The effective driver for change was external, coming principally from the DfES, who require LEAs both to see that their schools collect ethnic background data on

every pupil and to set targets for the achievement of ethnic minority pupils (DfEE, 2001).

In the early stages progress is slow because of the failure to convince key players that the task is important, and initially it is hampered by the unwillingness of Senior Officers to challenge Heads for fear of upsetting them. Even when this situation changes, the administrative staff responsible for collecting information from schools decide to 'play safe' and stick with the prevailing culture of not upsetting schools. There are underlying tensions between those who see the task as essentially one of *collecting* and keeping records, and those who see it as one of *using* the information to monitor performance to identify disparities. The first group focus on ways of reducing the 'bureaucratic burden' through the use of ICT record keeping systems; the second on promoting good monitoring practices as part of a wider school improvement agenda – a situation which is eventually resolved by clearer guidance from the DfES and a single Working Group within 'Trentshire' LEA. Considering that 11% of 'Trentshire' Education staff currently decline to specify their own ethnicity, progress has been significant.

Commentary

Evidence from both the interviews and Scenario B shows a series of constraints, frustrations and dilemmas, resulting from the inherent tensions within equality policies identified in Chapter 12 and the uncertainties of the LEA Officer role, as identified in Chapter 13.

A strong message from the interviews is that Officers feel frustrated by their inability to intervene in schools to make the input they wish, collect the information they need, or to fund the required response. Such frustrations are underpinned by the inherent tension between the autonomy of schools and the responsibilities of the LEA (Riley, 2000, p.61) [Table 6.2], which is exacerbated for Officers by the knowledge that the LEA is accountable as well as responsible – the

OfSTED Framework for the Inspection of LEAs [Appendix 7] makes it clear that there is no 'take it or leave it' option for LEA Officers.

Other tensions identified by Riley are evident from the interview comments. Service Manager D, Education Officers A, B and E all share experiences of tensions between acting as an advocate of children and parents and providing support to schools; experiences which in general relate to another of Riley's points of tension, between the school standards agenda and the broader social inclusion agenda – getting schools to admit, or retain on roll, pupils who are likely to be 'a problem' and who might adversely affect the school's standing in the 'League Tables'. Officers are evidently concerned that the neo-liberal 'equal access' policies they administer favour middle class families and contribute to social inequalities, but cannot do other than act within the law, however stressful. Advisor B graphically describes the conflicting pressures she experiences in working with schools whose agenda may differ from the LEA's, the government's, or her own. Her role is similar to that of Officers studied by Ainscow et al., and the tensions she describes reflect their findings on dilemmas experienced through differences in stance, agenda and conflict of interests (Ainscow et al., 2000, p.11-13).

There is also tension between the treatment of individuals and groups. Unease over the equal outcomes approach, discussed in Chapter 12, surfaces again here – for instance in Scenario B where one Head made clear her preference for a 'colour blind' approach - but in this chapter the debate broadens to cover concerns over the 'performativity' agenda and the monitoring of outcomes by groups. As Scenario B shows, the national school improvement 'performativity' agenda was a positive benefit to 'Trentshire' Officers, providing the power to break through five years of ineffective local attempts to acquire the minority ethnic monitoring data it requires to combat inequalities of performance noted in Chapter 10 and illustrated in Appendix 8.

Also identifiable are a set of constraints around the conceptions of equality Officers are expected to promote. Most are aware of the inherent weaknesses and tensions within the 'equal opportunities' tradition, or struggle to come to terms with an approach which implies that all differences should be valued without distinction. Such questioning produces uncertainty, prompting a call by several Officers for a stronger lead and direction on equality from senior managers. Some evidently feel that equality is not given sufficient priority within 'Trentshire' – a view supported by events described in Scenario B where principles espoused by TEEAG were not taken up by some Senior Officers, with consequent delays in improvement and change.

It is to the question of how best to implement improvement and change that I turn next.

Chapter 15 WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO: PROMOTING CHANGE

“I wouldn’t be doing this job if I didn’t think we were there to change something.” (*Advisor A*)

This chapter considers the strategies Officers adopt to promote change in ‘Trentshire’ schools and the wider community, pulling together strands on perceptions of equality and Officer roles and exploring them within the context of policy implementation. A strong thread throughout the chapter is the commitment of individual ‘Trentshire’ Officers to promoting equality and effecting change, perceiving:

“...actually believing it, actually having your heart and mind in it.” (*Service Manager D*)

to be an essential ingredient of successful policy implementation; a second thread is that this is a long-term agenda:

“I have no quick answer, no magic wand. I think we have to acknowledge that this is not a change that’s going to happen overnight, it has to be seen as a process that’s going to happen over several years.” (*Education Officer E*)

I start by considering Officer views on firstly, changing attitudes and behaviours and secondly, the processes adopted to promote change, and in Scenario C, move on to consider, using the LEA’s Social Inclusion Task Group as a case, ‘Trentshire’s’ attempts to devise and implement a strategy for promoting social justice.

Changing attitudes and behaviours

The general feeling amongst Officers is that their role goes beyond checking that formal policies are in place and advising on correct

procedures and processes to encompass changing practices, as Education Officer E explains:

“I think it depends on how equal opps. are *implemented*. Not so much the policy but the implementation because there can be policy statements on equal opportunities, but that doesn’t necessarily lead to implementation. Sometimes I think we can persuade ourselves that we are offering equal opportunities...but actually to ensure participation is quite another thing.” (*Education Officer E*)

But how do Officers perceive ‘changing practice’ – as improving behaviours, attitudes or outcomes? Service Manager B, in referring back to work done in the mid-1990s to promote ‘Equality in Education’ [Appendix 2], distinguishes between practice and attitudes, and concludes it is easier to attempt to change practices – though her comments contain an element of doubt suggesting that her personal, rather than professional, choice might be to change attitudes:

“It’s very hard to change. You come back to, do you change attitudes, or do you change practice? I suppose in the work context you’ve got to go for practice. That’s what we did in the end. A lot of the antiracist stuff in the 70s was all about making them cry, and changing attitudes, and I think we went for the model which was about changing practice.” (*Service Manager B*)

Advisor A distinguishes between attitude and professional behaviour:

“Basically if we are talking about teachers and educational staff, it’s their job, and it’s looking at professionalism side of issues. Even if their attitude doesn’t change, their behaviour quite often needs to. And it’s possibly through changing behaviour that they

then change their own attitudes. Do you know what I mean? A course on 'Diversity in the Curriculum' or whatever is not going to change anyone who has racist attitudes. It's just not. But it might change how they behave because they know they shouldn't be behaving in a certain way." (*Advisor A*)

Education Officer E sees 'changing attitudes' as the key to the successful promotion of inclusion in 'Trentshire', acknowledging it as a long-term task, debating whose attitudes to change and concluding the need to alter and extend the understanding of both those who are to be included – the 'different minority' - and the 'majority':

"We do have to change the majority view to value differences, not just to iron them out, because we don't want everyone to end up the same, so the 'majority' have to value differences at the same time as those being 'included' are valued for what they bring to the situation, but also know how they have to change to take part in the opportunities. You go round in circles with this, don't you?" (*Education Officer E*)

Service Manager A takes a slightly different stance, looking for change from the 'majority' – the whole school in her example – and not necessarily from the 'minority' – the individual child:

"Then schools say, we can't do it all for just one child – but I say, you are not, you are doing it for the whole school. Changing attitudes. I say, 'Don't involve the child, or the family, but involve the others and focus on changing attitudes'. We've had a Bengali family move into a school in 'Moorland', and I've told the school not to focus on the child or the family or even Bengali culture, but to think about stereotypes and attitudes which need to be questioned and challenged." (*Service Manager A*)

Advisor C feels the issue is much wider, referring loosely to 'that aspect of the wider community of schools as agents of change', extending to 'parents, grandparents', whose views can be 'deeply engrained.' Similarly, Service Manager D, who has frequent dealings with parents, recognises both the need to change public attitudes, and the difficulty of doing so:

"And until we start talking to parents.....and how you change public opinion I really don't know, because the more I hear as I go out and about, I'm horrified." (*Service Manager D*)

There is an element here of the aspirational, and of the recognition that this is a far-reaching and major agenda – with comparatively few indications from Officers of how it can be effectively met. One such comes from Education Officer D who sees a role for governing bodies in 'influencing the social setting our schools are in', and explains the LEA's efforts to recruit governors from wider social and racial backgrounds to reflect the community served by the school.

Processes and actions for change

This section covers what Clark et al. refer to as 'technology' (Clark et al., 1999, p. 163), the operational processes which Officers employ to effect change. For several the preferred option is to make 'small step' improvements, although generally short-term procedural and managerial changes are perceived as limited mechanisms for encouraging long-term attitudinal change. Service Manager B notes the dilemmas in using 'small step' methods, which could be too small to impact:

"We go more and more into making it tangible and achievable in small steps, and then you don't necessarily achieve anything through these small steps, so there is always going to be this tension."
(*Service Manager B*)

Small step improvements are chiefly administrative, often using paper policies or formal procedures as a 'way-in' to challenge the status quo and promote change. Advisor A and Service Manager C both emphasise the need for action planning processes to underpin effective implementation, and Advisor A explains how she challenges schools to think how they will implement their policy statements. Advisor C identifies similar potential 'small step' improvements within Departmental structures, comparing the resources and support available from one LEA service, Child Protection, with the current lack of similar materials for equality and concluding that this stems partly from poor funding, but also from the lack of clear organisational arrangements and a single contact point for schools.

Several Officers comment on the use of performance measurement techniques in promoting change in both 'Trentshire' Education Department and in schools, regarding them as valuable in identifying areas of disparity and underperformance. Education Officer D and Service Manager E both claim to find the statutory Best Value Performance procedures helpful in promoting improvement, describing how they used the 'CRE Standards for Local Government' (CRE, 1995) as a framework for assessing the current level of equality practice in their Services and in drawing up an action plan for improvement, arguing that Best Value performance indicators are powerful drivers for change since they are statutory and externally imposed – Education Officer B and Advisor A say the same of OfSTED's role in effecting change in schools.

Officers also use performance data to assess the extent to which services are accessed by individuals from different 'minority' groups, and to identify any patterns of disparity potentially due to gender, ethnicity or disability. For instance, Advisor A explains how she uses performance data in schools to encourage good equality practices:

"I've shown them comparative data for different groups on Baseline to GCSE, and then I try to get

them to say *why* that is. And that brings out all the inequalities that are happening within the system, so I think it's a really powerful way of looking at inequalities." (*Advisor A*)

Disparities of outcomes identified through performance monitoring mechanisms are then used as the focus of targeted action. Tensions between the 'equal treatment' and 'equal outcomes' approaches surface again here - some Officers are clearly uneasy with the concept of targeting and compensating underachieving groups with additional support and funding:

"But as soon as you target, that sounds unfair. You aren't treating equally. And at some point or other in that process someone has to make a decision about the targeting, and the principles on which that targeting is going to take place. And even if one accepted that it was an equal approach, how would one ensure that the criteria on which one was making the judgment were equable?" (*Education Officer B*)

"You know about the County Council giving money to disadvantaged areas, I think it's important to recognise *all* areas of disadvantage, that's the thing. I think that's a whole social issue that needs addressing, that the government just isn't. So I do think there should be equitable funding, but for *all* disadvantaged groups. I think it needs to be clear where the funding comes from, and why and all of those kinds of issues. But until you've got things like ethnic monitoring in place you can't make that argument clear." (*Advisor A*)

But Service Manager B, the 'covert radical', sees targeted action as the crux of her work:

"Yes, I still find that lots of people we work with are very unhappy with the term 'positive action'. We should be all about positive action in local government. That's what we do, if you stop and think about it. Target, focus, identify needs." (*Service Manager B*)

However, others point out that additional support through targeted funding will not by itself change attitudes, and emphasise the need for staff training, both in schools and LEA Offices - and for Education Officer A this offers good monetary value:

"And then there are your schools that just go 'Oooh, we can't cope!' but they could cope if they just had the right training, knowledge, background, support, which doesn't necessarily mean a bag of money."
(*Education Officer A*)

Advisor A claims that, 'If you call it 'equal opportunities' training people don't come' and is hoping that she can train teachers 'under the inclusion label' which is apparently more attractive to schools. Service Manager D emphasises that all LEA Officers and their support staff should be trained so they can understand and engage with equality policies, and be seen to implement them:

"I don't think we do enough work with our own LEA Officers to ensure that they understand what a policy means. You know, your admin staff or whoever, that they actually take it on board and believe it. Because I have staff in my office, and I've heard comments after they've put the telephone down to parents whose English is probably not at the level that they would want it to be that I've not been happy about. And we've had a small conversation about that very quietly, but as far as I'm concerned they've signed up to the LEA's policy and we try to do our training, but it's much deeper than that." (*Service Manager D*)

Some Officers refer to the potential offered by a 'champion' – a key individual acting as a change-agent, mostly referring to the tireless work by Service Manager A as chair of TEEAG; others talk about the role of the Head in effecting change in a school. Education Officer E regards the attitude of the Head as a crucial element in determining whether schools are 'inclusive':

"I would like to clone the Heads who are open to accepting a wide range of pupils from a wide range of needs. I actually say Heads here, because they seem so influential in the schools. I could name one school where initially the Head had that ethos and the staff didn't, and it was interesting to watch how the staff were turned around and changed in their attitude." (*Education Officer E*)

Service Manager C comments on the value of good practice examples, especially in encouraging others to take a risk, using the example of a job-share she had established to enable two 'working mums' to return to employment. But for Education Officer C the key change agent is nearer home:

"You can't change things unless you actually believe in them, can you? You've got to live it." (*Education Officer C*)

The messages from the interviews point to the size of the change agenda, and indicate some of the 'small step' initiatives which Officers employ to influence attitudes and practice in specific areas. I turn next to a consideration of a higher-level response, using Scenario C to describe how 'Trentshire' LEA attempted to devise and implement a strategic plan for promoting social justice.

SCENARIO C: promoting social inclusion

This scenario describes the work over two years of 'Trentshire' Education Department's Social Inclusion Team (TESIT), a group of fifteen Officers from across all Education Services (including Early Years and Community Education, but excluding headteachers) established to co-ordinate the Department's promotion of social inclusion. It is chaired by the Assistant Director (Children's Services) who leads on Social Inclusion within the Education Service; I am a member, as are Service Managers A, D, F, Education Officers B and E, and there is overlap with the membership of the Equality Action Planning Group (TEEAG).

The timescale: Spring 2000 to Summer 2002.

The task: To formulate a clear Departmental policy for promoting social inclusion, together with realistic strategies for putting it into place.

The key players:

- Members of TESIT
- Assistant Director (Children's Services)

Off stage:

- Elected Members and Chief Executive of 'Trentshire'
- 'Trentshire' County Council's Economic Development Unit.

Dialogue and action:**Scene 1: Discussing aims and roles**

Period: Spring 2000 to Spring 2001

Appearing in this scene are:

- Members of TESIT
- Assistant Director (Children's Services)

Right from the inaugural meeting in March 2000, it is clear that TESIT has been set a complex task. Furthermore, it comprises Officers who have not previously worked together as a group and who bring fifteen separate agendas and conceptions of 'social inclusion'. Meetings become characterised by lengthy and repetitive debate on terminologies - there is no acrimony, but considerable power positioning as Officers try to prove their own understanding of, and approach to, social inclusion is somehow more valid than the rest; understandings based on integration of special educational needs pupils; reduction of pupil disaffection and equality are all debated; as are the relative claims of school-specific or 'cradle-to-grave' emphases.

Eventually, TESIT agrees its aim:

"To identify and wherever possible remove the barriers to participation and achievement."

This instigates debate on the LEA's relationship with schools. The Officer representing TACA, the 'Trentshire' Advisory and Curriculum Agency, questions her involvement, feeling that its dependency on income from schools makes contribution to TESIT problematic since market forces are in tension with promoting inclusion; others argue that the role of TACA is crucial in ensuring the curriculum is equally accessible. The TACA representative decides against further attendance.

TESIT realises it has no knowledge of LEA activities to promote social inclusion, and commissions a mapping exercise of current action, showing target groups, empowerment, access, awareness raising, provision of support and monitoring, in an attempt to identify and address both priorities and gaps.

By Spring 2001 the Assistant Director (Children's Services) realises that TESIT have spent a year discussing issues without completing

their remit to produce a social inclusion policy for the LEA together with a strategy for its delivery and asks Education Officer E and Service Manager F, to re-write their draft inclusion statement to cover wider issues of social inclusion [Appendix 9]. This develops into a parallel, but separate, exercise to the on-going mapping activity.

(At this point, noises off from the Members, who request a Best Value Review of Social Inclusion. Scene closes)

Scene 2: Delivering 'Social Inclusion': the corporate response

Period: Spring 2001 to Spring 2002

Appearing in this scene are:

- Members of TESIT
- Assistant Director (Children's' Services)
- Head of 'Trentshire's' Economic Development Unit

In the wings:

- Members and Chief Executive of 'Trentshire'

The Head of 'Trentshire's' Economic Development Unit attends a TESIT meeting to outline the scope of the formal Best Value Review and the required involvement from Education. He talks through the corporate definitions to be used, with 'social inclusion' defined as:

"the policies and services which aim to address social exclusion, with the intention of improving opportunities and quality of life for the most deprived and disadvantaged individuals and groups within society"

and 'social exclusion' as:

"a cycle of deprivation in which disadvantaged people are unable to gain access to the economic and social benefits enjoyed by the majority"

and shows how County Council Services can assist in reducing the risk of social exclusion [Appendix 12]. He questions TESIT on the approach taken to social inclusion within Education, asking about

policies, needs analyses, locality or client group targeting, monitoring, and evidence of 'joined up working' with other relevant Departments or agencies, and requests case study evidence of preventative work. It is evident that TESIT are now working to a corporate-led agenda and timescale - before producing any realistic implementation plans for the Education Service.

The Members' view is that 'Trentshire's' social inclusion policy will concentrate on preventing exclusion amongst groups most at risk from multiple and inter-related problems, and they ask Officers in the Chief Executive's Department to produce options on making a step-change in preventative interventions for the priority groups, building on targeted resources already deployed by the County Council and its partners, but specifying that solutions must be within existing resources and structures.

Scene 3: Delivering 'Social Inclusion': the Education response

Period: Spring 2002 to Autumn 2002

Appearing in this scene are:

- Members of TESIT
- Service Manager A

Noises off:

- Trentshire' County Council's Economic Development Unit.
- Lead Officer for the Children's' Fund, 'Trentshire' Social Services

The action returns to the Education Service, but is now scripted by the lead officers of the corporate Best Value Review. TESIT use this framework to share experiences of activities in two specific areas of social deprivation, North Moorton and the Riverside Estate in Trent St. Mary, and all except TACA contribute notes of successes and challenges; projects include training Pakistani mothers as family support volunteers; working with Traveller families to develop positive parenting skills of children experiencing behavioural difficulties; improving family literacy through the Reading Recovery scheme and

a community funded self-help scheme. The emphasis is on improving educational standards through work with the whole community.

TESIT identifies the common characteristics of successful projects: community consultation; strong commitment from, and good communication between, the several agencies involved; specifically targeted funding; and consider the roles they play: as facilitators with partner agencies; as enablers, working with schools to support pupils and parents rather than directly supporting the schools. They also identify challenges they face: co-ordinating strategies and resources across different agencies to ensure optimum use; formulating successful bids for external funding; sustaining projects once specific funding ends and ensuring the commitment of local headteachers.

By Summer 2002 it becomes clear to TESIT that social inclusion projects are not exclusively educational. The corporate 'Trentshire' Economic Development Unit secures grant funding through the government's Single Regeneration Budget for projects in North Moorton and the Riverside, and appoints project managers. LEA Officers work closely with colleagues in 'Trentshire' Social Services to develop projects funded through the Children's Fund¹⁰ and a Lead Officer is appointed to work in the Chief Executive's Department.

(Action moves to the Chief Executive's Department, and TESIT disbands).

Reviewing the performance:

Scenario C is spread over three years, but initially is dominated by dialogue rather than action as TESIT struggle to reach a common conception of 'social inclusion' and an agreed focus for activities.

¹⁰ a government initiative to help improve the lives of children at risk of social exclusion through targeted preventative work with children aged 5 to 13 years and their families

Paradoxically, TESIT is only able to progress when 'social inclusion' becomes a Council priority, and, in spite of the apparent loss of 'LEA power' to the Chief Executive's Department, realise that it is only through joint working with other 'Trentshire' Services and the Council's external partners that they can offer effective support to children at risk of social exclusion. Importantly, this represents a shift in approach to raising education standards, not through support *to* schools on school improvement, but working *with* schools and appropriate agencies to tackle inequalities in communities. This supports Ozga's claim that partnership is now much more diffuse, embracing the whole community and tying it into the project of improvement (Ozga, 2000, p.102).

Commentary

Much of the interview discussion concerns aspired values informing paper equality policies, how those aspirations might be achieved and the relationship between implementation and change. Few Officers refer to the textual content, reflecting the confusion surrounding the plethora of equality policies in 'Trentshire'; the only documents cited as helpful by Officers are those defining the Equality Standards for Local Government, which form part of the Council's statutory Best Value performance indicators (CRE, 1995; DETR, 1999, p.24) - an external framework from the government's 'performativity' agenda (and the fact that my 'day-job' includes co-ordinating these indicators might have influenced their remarks!).

Officers clearly regard *implementation* as meaning *change* rather than *compliance*; most are apparently seeking what Ball refers to as 'second order effects' – the long-term impact of policy changes on patterns of social access, opportunity and social justice – as well as 'first order effects' of changes in practices and structures (Ball, 1994, p.25). A clear message from the interviews is that Officers want to see a change in attitudes from colleagues, teachers and 'the whole

community', but would mostly settle for behavioural changes achieved through administrative procedures as a 'stepping stone', while arguing that attitudinal changes should remain firmly on the long-term agenda. They identify various strategies for changing behaviour: training, good practice examples and the use of 'champions'; and a range of 'small step' technologies for changing practices and structures: co-ordinating funding arrangements, monitoring current practices more effectively to identify areas of disparity, and targeting resources to address those identified, but it is not clear from their comments how – or even if - they perceive these 'small-steps' accruing to an overall improvement plan.

My impression is that, compared with the richness of interview comments on equality and role, there is a paucity of views on implementation strategies, with Officers quicker to point to weaknesses in current approaches than to suggest alternatives. One identified weakness is the lack of a coherent co-ordinated strategy, akin to the 'management by initiative' confusion of projects identified by OfSTED in their study of LEA support for minority ethnic pupils (OfSTED, 2001b, p.11). Where positive programmes are mentioned they are not thought through - several mention 'training' as if a universal panacea, without specifying details of content, clientele and criteria for selection, methods and evaluation. Some argue that 'training' will not on its own combat inequalities, but, although this may be true in terms of distributional justice, I personally would argue that it has a value in helping to raise awareness of relational justice and reducing oppressions caused through Young's five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism or violence (Young, 1990, pp.48-61).

The lack of practical strategies for promoting social inclusion proved a problem for TESIT, who were faced with multiple competing claims within a wide agenda and no clear notion of priorities until an external framework was provided. As a member of the group myself, I recall

endless circular discussion on preferred options, with ideas constantly challenged and reshaped by colleagues, and turned to the literature to compare my experience with others engaged in policy implementation; Clark's research study of the movement towards 'inclusive' schools which I outlined in Chapter 6 (Clark et al., 1999) suggests that it is shared. The inclusion project Clark describes similarly requires wide acceptance of a specific value-set, but has a requirement for organisational and structural change and an emphasis on distributional justice within a predominately local agenda. In comparison, the promotion of equality and social inclusion does not require changes in school organisation and is probably more dependent for success on factors beyond the LEA's immediate control, but nevertheless I feel it would be useful to consider my own findings in the light of Clark et al.'s research.

In many respects their findings are similar – their case schools display a high level of commitment to the principle, as do 'Trentshire' Officers, and had encountered complex difficulties in translating principles into practice. Clark et al.'s study found reliance on systems and procedures to promote change, but expressed concern whether these would lead to inclusion, and whether the individual 'steps' were consistent with the overall principles – findings also apparent in 'Trentshire' LEA. They concluded that their case study schools were all sites at which complex processes intersect and that the four theoretical explanations they considered should be regarded as complementary rather than alternative.

Clark's research suggests that Fullan's theory of change process (Clark et al., 1999, p.166; Fullan, 2001, p.92) requires some sort of management steer to give it direction and progress milestones, and this is echoed by TESIT's experience, where reaching clarity of shared meaning proved difficult without the framework provided by the Best Value Review. Similarly they found that organisational theories benefited from a management steer to enable teachers to

operate as collaborative problem-solvers (Clark et al., 1999, p.168) and my observations suggest TESIT were only able to move forward as a collaborative 'learning-group' once the problem had been externally defined by the Best Value Review. Clark also considered the dilemmatic perspective – the need to find a practical solution to a set of dilemmas (ibid, p.170), which my study has shown to be a key driver to progress in 'Trentshire'.

Importantly for my study Clark et al. considered the conflict perspective of policy implementation (ibid, p.169) - importantly because this is grounded in a notion of policy as 'text' (Ball, 1994, p.16), as capable of being re-shaped, contextualised and re-formulated in a whole range of sites, which is the conception underpinning my thesis. Clark claimed this perspective went a long way to explaining his findings, including the contradictions between espoused policy and actual practice in terms of the interplay of conflicting local interests, and similarly, it provides an explanation for the apparent piecemeal development of implementation approaches by 'Trentshire LEA Officers as they seek the ideal response to the complexities and conflicts within their own professional areas. Implementing equality policies to promote change is evidently a complex social process, not linear, rational and technical.

Chapter 16 CONCLUSION

In my concluding chapter I look both backwards and forwards, to review my research study and its findings and to consider how it can be used to improve equality practices in 'Trentshire'. I start with a self-evaluation of my research strategy.

Reviewing the study

I consider the process of review at the end of a study differs from that which has informed its progress and development. That, as I explained in Chapter 4, was a reflexive and iterative exercise of constant questioning and reshaping, of using emerging findings to challenge my own thoughts and decision-making; but as I now look back over the completed study I want a more structured evaluation process. Since several Officers told me in interview that they found the formal 'frameworks' published by OfSTED and the Commission for Racial Equality helpful in assessing their equality practices, I decided to apply the same methodology to my study; my framework for evaluation is Griffiths' ten principles of educational research for social justice (Griffiths, 1998a, pp.95-98) [Appendix 13], which I have selected principally because they did not directly inform my strategic planning, thus offering an 'external' framework for evaluation.

I can claim to have worked within most of Griffiths' ten principles. I have acquired knowledge about LEA Officers' perceptions of equality and their roles in promoting it, and in doing so have worked in collaboration and community with 'Trentshire' Education Officers - as an 'insider-researcher' this was relatively easy and problem-free in spite of theoretically offering the potential for colleagues to be un-co-operative and suspicious. I have endeavoured to be open to reflexivity about my own position and interests, and my own understanding and values, and have been honest with those I interviewed about my own beliefs, uncertainties and dilemmas as I

entered into dialogue on their own understandings. Griffiths' sixth principle, openness to political groupings and perspectives through the creation of 'cross-cut alliances' between the groups studied (ibid, p.96) has relevance once contextualised - my interview subjects were all third-tier Officers of broadly similar status, but I needed to recognise the different positionings of those working on the school improvement agenda, who work within a managerialist discourse championing 'performativity' and those working in support of individual pupils and their parents, who demonstrate 'welfarist' principles of professional carers.

Griffiths' eighth principle is predicated on the belief that there is no hope of doing perfect research. I accept the logic of her argument that the process for implementing research plans is not linear but messy and *ad hoc* – it mirrors my own view of policy implementation informing this thesis – but find her statement stark and cynical. If perfection is not to be found, why bother with formulating a strategy appropriate to the research study? I spent time over this stage of my planning, largely because I struggled to place my strategy into a 'tradition', but feel my study was strengthened by the effort. Looking back, I am not sure that I can claim that it is specifically 'feminist' research – but it is about challenging power-relations, particularly between the white, middle-class 'Trentshire' and those socially excluded from that norm.

I also have difficulty with Griffiths' first principle – not because my purpose was other than achieving improvement in social justice, but because it requires the 'results of research to include knowledge and improvements' (ibid, p.95). I can claim an increase in knowledge but what evidence do I have that my study has helped combat inequalities in 'Trentshire'? As Chapter 15 illustrated, social change is a long-term and complex process and all I can claim is that I have started the process in a small way by interviewing colleagues to increase their awareness of equality and diversity issues.

The increase in knowledge comes from my findings. My initial research questions focused on 'Trentshire' Officers perceptions of their task in relation to implementation of equality policies and their role in the policy process, but I quickly realised that an improvement in equality practices is a much wider issue than the implementation of, or compliance with, formal equality policies, since it underpins all aspects of the LEA's work whether with schools, individual pupils or the wider community.

My findings reveal a commitment to the promotion of equality by 'Trentshire' Officers in spite of the struggle many experience in trying to reconcile the requirement to uphold statutory procedures grounded in neo-liberal legislation with their individual professional values grounded in a desire for social justice. The dominant discourse in 'Trentshire' champions equity, but New Labour's educational agenda increasingly focuses on diversity and social inclusion, creating tension between conceptions based on 'market forces' and 'communitarianism'; on 'sameness' and 'difference' and distributional and relational justice.

A key element of my study has been an investigation of the current role of LEA Officers in a context which leaves them accountable but not directly responsible for the delivery of an education service, and my findings indicate that the three identifiable strands within the role – working with schools, with individual pupils and parents and with the Council's partner agencies – all contain tensions requiring Officers to face dilemmas on a daily basis. LEA Officers are pulled between conflicting agendas set by central government, school governing bodies, individual parents, other 'Trentshire' Council Departments or partner agencies whilst expected to assume an ill-defined leadership role. Some degree of optimism has now returned to LEAs following the Labour government's clarification of their roles, but it remains to be seen how the concept of 'compacts' [Appendix 6] will work out in

practice. What is clear is it that the relationship with schools has changed for good – LEAs no longer direct schools, nor focus exclusively on them, but work with schools to raise standards by improving the social capital of their local communities.

I think a key question that should be framed is whether the promotion of equality in 'Trentshire' has been hindered by the LEA's current relationship with its schools. Assuming that Officers *are* able to direct schools, how would this help to combat inequality? Direction would help ensure schools have paper policies, but this is already a national requirement, with compliance checked through OfSTED; it might help improve professional behaviours through insistence on certain standards, but this would not necessarily lead to a change in attitudes. My point is that the LEA cannot *direct* values or improvement in relational justice any more successfully than national government. Greater control of schools might possibly encourage improvements in distributional justice, assuming that the LEA could directly target funds – but national, not local, government are now the major players here. There is considerable evidence to support the claim that neo-liberal policies of successive governments have disadvantaged the 'have-nots' and led to an increase in social inequalities, but it is the market forces principle on which these policies are based that has been the major contributor, not the loss of power of LEAs.

My thesis is that, although the power of LEAs in relation to schools has diminished, individual officers retain a key role in promoting equality policy, particularly in working at the micro-level on individual cases where they can function as shapers and enablers, challenging the status-quo, raising awareness of policy requirements and negotiating a route through dilemmas. This is supported by the evidence, which reveals that 'Trentshire' Officers have the commitment and tenacity to find resolutions even though the process is frequently stressful and time-consuming.

Looking forward

In my final section I look forward, and consider how my study can be used to inform more effective ways of combating inequality in 'Trentshire', in terms of both what to promote and how to promote it. It is outside its scope to produce a detailed programme for change, but I shall use it to make recommendations to the Director of Education.

My belief is that 'Trentshire' LEA's approach to equality should be more firmly grounded in a conceptual framework based on relational justice. This has both a legal basis, at least in respect of 'race' - the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act requires local authorities to promote good relations between different racial groups – and a moral one. There is evidence within 'Trentshire' that some groups are marginalised through cultural imperialism, and the LEA should work to counteract the perception that in 'Trentshire' the norm is what Education Officer C refers to as 'white middle class cosy'. In this study I have analysed 'Trentshire's' equality policies, but my recommendation is for an analysis of its mainstream policies to identify potential sites of oppression offering disadvantage to particular groups and to consider local remedial actions. In my summary to Part IV I refer to the Gewirtz's framework of questions based on Young's conceptualisation of social justice (Gewirtz, 2001, p.63), and I consider that 'Trentshire' LEA would benefit from using this as the basis for an equality audit of its mainstream policies.

This is a wide agenda, which needs tackling at different levels. My findings indicate that policy implementation is a messy social process driven by tension and pressures, and I have argued that the discretion possessed by individual Officers to resolve conflict situations by shaping responses gives them a powerful and positive role in promoting equality; but the issue is to ensure this is a strength rather than a hindrance. But does my evidence indicate a theoretical

strategy likely to lead to change in 'Trentshire'? I have noted the conceptual tension between the theories of change grounded in shared consensus of meaning and those grounded in conflict, but like Clark (Clark et al., 1999, p.169) consider that in practice these approaches can be complementary.

My study indicates that several Officers are looking for stronger guidance on the boundaries to their discretion, and I would argue that such a framework would give them greater cohesion and confidence. What is needed is for 'Trentshire' LEA to clarify the parameters in which Officers can operate, and to ensure they understand the conceptual framework underpinning and informing equality policy so that they share consensus of wider aims, but are able to use their discretion in dealing with the conflicts and tensions in their day-to-day dealing with schools, parents and the wider community. A mainstream policy audit as outlined earlier in this section would provide the basis for this framework, and if combined with the statutory Equality Standard for Local Government (Employers' Organisation for Local Government, 2001) would provide a useful tool for 'Trentshire' Officers. My recommendation is that TEEAG should undertake this work in conjunction with Officers from 'Trentshire's' Corporate Diversity Group, and through their informed role as 'equality champions' offer guidance and support to Officers and LEA Services. Fullan argues that pressure and support are paradoxically both essential agents for effective change (Fullan, 2001, p.91), and I consider that my proposal, with its combination of external pressure from the statutory Equality Standard and simultaneous support from internal 'champions', will help 'Trentshire' LEA Officers 'make equality a reality'.

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APPENDIX 1**Corporate Diversity Statement**

- Trentshire County Council welcomes the diversity of gender, ages, abilities, ethnic origin, faiths and cultures of the people who make up our society.
- It is a fundamental principle of the County Council's policies that all people should be valued regardless of their economic circumstances, sex, age, disabilities, culture, ethnicity, language (including British Sign Language), religion or sexual orientation.
- The County Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all people particularly those who are:
 - seeking and using the County Council's services
 - employees or prospective employees of the County Council or its contractors who supply goods or services to the Council
 - working or seeking work in a voluntary capacity supported by the Council.
- The County Council believes that the quality of services is enhanced when the make-up of the workforce reflects that of the population serviced.
- The County Council will use its influence to promote understanding and harmony between people. It will work with other agencies and organisations to eliminate discrimination, harassment and attacks on any group or individual
- The County Council will seek to ensure equal opportunities through:
 - ensuring that services are equally accessible and relevant to the needs of different client groups
 - appropriate recruitment, employment and promotion practices and procedures
 - letting of contracts to suppliers of goods and services
 - development of policies including consultation with communities and groups affected
 - training for all employees
 - publicity for the access to services in relevant languages and formats where necessary.
- The County Council will monitor performance in these areas by the most appropriate means for each service. Progress on implementing the Statement will be monitored on a regular basis.

APPENDIX 2*Your Education Service*
Trentshire**EQUALITY IN EDUCATION**

In 'Trentshire' we believe all pupils are of equal value and should have equal entitlement to high quality education.

Young people need a well-rounded education which:

- contributes to their personal, social and moral development;
- enables them to become active and responsible members of their community.

We are promoting equality throughout our service through:

- our services to schools;
- our services to parents and pupils;
- our community education services;
- our policy of consultation and participation;
- our role as an employer.

OUR SERVICES TO SCHOOLS

The Local Education Authority (LEA) and its schools recognise that the need to promote race equality is inspired by both educational values and legal responsibilities. We will help schools to translate the broad aim of equality into a set of challenging but achievable policies. Schools will aim to deliver a programme for pupils designed to achieve three objectives:

- to ensure high quality education for all pupils;
- to support the development of personal and cultural identity;
- to prepare pupils for full participation in society.

OUR SERVICES TO PARENTS AND PUPILS

The LEA will establish policies to promote equality and eradicate discrimination by:

- tackling racial harassment;
- providing language support for bilingual learners;
- raising the achievement of black, bilingual and traveller pupils;

- ensuring a fair distribution of school places;
- providing services for children with special educational needs;
- advising on attendance and exclusions.

OUR COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERVICE

The LEA will ensure that community education services:

- are available and accessible to all sections of the community
- are aware of, understand and support the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of communities in 'Trentshire';
- counter racism and promote understanding amongst different racial groups.

OUR POLICY OF CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

The LEA will promote equality through:

- consulting with minority ethnic groups;
- improving communication between minority ethnic communities and schools, local councillors and county advisory bodies;
- providing key information in community languages and non-written form;
- ensuring that minority ethnic communities have full access to both LEA and schools' complaints and appeals procedures.

OUR ROLE AS AN EMPLOYER

The LEA recognises that minority ethnic people are under-represented among education staff and that discrimination against a person on the grounds of his/her race is wrong and unlawful. Therefore, the LEA will:

- take positive action to promote the appointment and development of ethnic minority staff so as to make full use of their talents and experience;
- encourage all staff to participate in the development and implementation of the LEA's policy of equality;
- advise school governing bodies on how to promote race equality through the employment of staff;
- prevent discrimination against minority ethnic employees and applicants.

APPENDIX 3: BIOGRAPHIES OF INTERVIEWED OFFICERS

Education Officer A: White female, early thirties, in same-sex relationship. Responsible for the oversight of school admissions, and for the day-to-day management of matching 'supply and demand' in school places, a role which brings her into constant contact with parents and headteachers. She previously taught English in secondary schools in the north of England, and came to 'Trentshire' three years ago from an advisory post in a northern LEA.

Education Officer B: White male, late thirties, married. Responsible for supporting a patch of 'West Trentshire' schools on school management issues, including the socially deprived 'Riverside Estate', and also has a county-wide role for advising schools on the legislative aspects of school exclusions. He has worked for 'Trentshire' LEA for three years, following a teaching career in secondary schools in south-east England. He lives in a small village in 'The Moors', and is a governor at the local primary school.

Education Officer C: White female, forties, married (to a partner of mixed-race heritage). Responsible for supporting a patch of schools in 'East Trentshire' on school management issues, and is particularly involved with headship appointments. She has worked for 'Trentshire' LEA for three years, following a teaching career in FE colleges and secondary schools in neighbouring authorities.

Education Officer D: White female, late twenties, married. Responsible for supporting schools and governing bodies on a variety of school improvement and management issues. She has worked for 'Trentshire' LEA for three years, and has primary teaching experience in a neighbouring county.

Education Officer E: White female, early fifties, married. A senior member of the Children's Services Team, she is responsible for overseeing the management of special needs support services, and for advising and supporting schools on learning and behaviour support issues. She has extensive experience within 'Trentshire' both as a primary teacher and as a Service Manager, but has been in her current Senior Officer post for only a year.

Advisor A: White female, thirties, married. She has specific responsibility for advising schools on cultural diversity and race awareness, and considerable experience of teaching bilingual children (she is herself a bilingual Welsh speaker). She is Chair of Governors at her son's primary school in 'Trentchester'.

Advisor B: White female, fifties, married. She has specific responsibility for advising schools on the education of gifted and talented children, and for music which is her teaching specialism. She has worked for 'Trentshire' as an advisor for fifteen years.

Advisor C: White male, fifties, married. A 'Trentshire' primary headteacher, seconded to the LEA to help with the implementation of the council's inclusion agenda, with extensive teaching experience in the primary sector. His current school, where he has been head for almost ten years, is a village primary in 'West Trentshire' with a sizeable Traveller community.

Service Manager A: White female, late fifties, disabled through long-term sickness, married. Manager of the county's Multicultural Education Service for the past eight years, and generally perceived to be the Lead Officer for Equality within 'Trentshire' Education Department. She has extensive teaching experience, both in multicultural inner-city primaries outside 'Trentshire' and as a support teacher of Traveller and minority ethnic pupils.

Service Manager B: White female, early fifties, single. Manager of the Governor Support Service, and has previously held Education Officer and Advisory Teacher posts for 'Trentshire' LEA. Worked for 'Trentshire' for fifteen years, following a career teaching English as an additional language in a neighbouring authority.

Service Manager C: White female, forties, unmarried. Manager of Human Resources in the Education Department, and developing the county's 'Work-Life Balance' initiative. Unlike the others she is not a qualified teacher, but has professional personnel qualifications. Worked for 'Trentshire' County Council for one year, joining from a similar position in an Inner London LEA, and has also lived and worked in Europe.

Service Manager D: White female, forties, married. Manager of the Special Educational Needs Assessment Service, and responsible for the statutory statementing process and for ensuring that statemented children are appropriately placed and supported – a role which brings her into constant contact with parents and headteachers. She has experience as a special needs teacher in the north-west of England, and has worked for 'Trentshire' for seven years.

Service Manager E: White female, fifties, married. Manager of the Education Information and Communications Technology (ICT) service, with responsibility for its strategic development. Worked with 'Trentshire' for ten years, initially as an Advisor for ICT and has previously been an Education Officer in a Midlands LEA and Head of an inner-city infants school with a predominantly Asian intake.

My own biographical details are: Service Manager; white female, mid-fifties, disabled by mobility problems, married. Responsible for management information, including statutory performance indicators. Worked for 'Trentshire' for twenty years, following a teaching career in neighbouring authority.

APPENDIX 4 INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK

PROMOTING EQUALITY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed

I should like to cover the following areas in the interview, but I'm not proposing to ask formal questions but to have a discussion round the topics. They needn't be in this order and we needn't cover them all. We can include other "burning issues" if you wish!

The interview will be taped.

All reference in the written report will be confidential (the LEA has been given a fictitious name).

What do you think is the aim of our equality policy?

- Equal treatment?
- Equality of access?
- Equal outcomes?
- Recognition of difference?
- Valuing diversity?
- Inclusion?

What do you see as its main focus?

- 'Race'/ethnicity? Gender? Disability?
- Can we have a single equality policy which effectively covers issues of gender, 'race'/ethnicity, class, disability, or should they be covered by separate policies?

Who or what are we trying to change?

- The "disadvantaged"?
- The majority?

What do you see as the role of the LEA in promoting equality?

- Policy guidance?
- Policy implementation?
- What constraints and dilemmas does your service face in this work, and how do you deal with them?
- Has your Service found that, in practice, equality issues often take a lower priority than you would like?

How can the LEA best ensure that schools have effective equality policies?

- How does your Service work with schools to ensure good equality practice?
- How effective do you feel it to be?

How best to effect changes?

- Should we be changing attitudes or structures?
- Would equitable funding for all or compensatory funding for the "disadvantaged" provide the best equality model for your work?

APPENDIX 5 POINTS OF TENSION IN THE LEA'S ROLE

Core role elements	What this means in practice	How this filters to the school level	Points of tension
Values expressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education as a public service and a basic entitlement - Schools as part of a local education community 	Affirmation of sense of community: Belief in a coherent whole: the strong supporting the weak	Providing support to schools V acting as advocate of children and parents
Strategic direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarity of purpose - Context specific: local interpretation of need + pursuit of national goals - Dependent on interaction between the professional and political 	<p>Schools understand both local and national agendas</p> <p>Even controversial policies are respected if they are decisive and have been reached after extensive consultation</p>	Assessment of local need and priorities V legislative boundaries and financial constraints set by central government
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rising aspirations and expectations - Momentum, enthusiasm, commitment, trust 	Climate promotes professional debate and exchange of good practice	Competing expectations within the local system
How the leadership role is exercised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear, well-defined and enabling leadership but no aspirations of the heroic - Partnership and consultation: relationships matter 	Schools feel valued: the Director holds schools so tightly in her regard that they are never forgotten	New initiatives may fragment connections in a locality
Mode of operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenge and support - Intervention if a school is in trouble - Services are efficiently managed and well-targeted 	<p>Schools and governors feel well supported</p> <p>Schools receive high quality services provided by dedicated professionals</p>	Autonomy of schools V responsibilities of LEAs
Focus of activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement orientated - 'Fresh start' where needed 	Teachers have access to school improvement initiatives, advisory services and challenging training and development initiatives	School standards agenda V broader social inclusion agenda

From: Riley, 2000, Table 1, p.61

APPENDIX 6 DfES / LEA 'COMPACT'

department for

education and skills

creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

**Supporting Transformation in Partnership:
A Statement of Intent for partnership working**

1. This Statement comprises an agreement between Local Authorities and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to work in partnership to achieve better educational outcomes for children and young people in the short and medium term.
2. We share a vision of an education system in which every child:
 - a. is accorded equal worth;
 - b. enjoys learning;
 - c. is equipped with the learning and skills they need for life; and
 - d. achieves their full potential.
3. Underpinning this vision is a commitment to high standards for all that can best be realised through a partnership in which local authorities and the DfES support and respect each others' contribution and work together to meet key educational aims. This work operates within a context of shared responsibilities across the full range of central and local government services, but focuses specifically on the learning and development of children and young people.
4. Local authorities are democratically accountable and that gives them a distinctive leadership role in the local community to set a vision for education and to bring together different partners to achieve change and improvement. National government is also democratically accountable and sets a framework to be interpreted locally in ways which raise educational standards. The common goal is to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the system, by building capacity and providing flexibility at the front line, backed by an intelligent accountability framework and by targeted intervention to deal with underperformance.
5. This partnership agrees to focus on:
 - providing high quality early education and childcare for more children;

- continuing the progress already made in primary education;
 - transforming secondary education;
 - developing a flexible and challenging 14-19 phase of education; and
 - transforming the school workforce, and in particular freeing teachers to focus on their professional responsibilities.
6. The focus of this partnership is on improving education for children of school age. In the future, the Statement could be extended to reflect the role of the LEA in life-long learning.
7. To implement the Statement of Intent nationally, DfES will: consider whether the Code of Practice on LEA School relations and other guidelines/regulations on LEA powers and duties could benefit from review; work towards improving communications, recognising the valuable role which local authorities can fulfil in local leadership and in the formation of national policy; give priority to working proactively with LEAs to ensure that all of the funding arrangements for 2004-05 are implemented effectively; and support and develop future planning arrangements, involving the introduction of a Single Education Plan for all local authorities by 2006.
8. To implement the Statement of Intent locally, each local education authority and the DfES will agree a compact, setting out at a strategic level which of the areas in Annex to this Statement are of greatest short to medium term importance within that authority. There will be an annual discussion of the agenda, and agreement by each of the signatories to the Statement to a revised Annex.
9. The focus is on partnership and developing the relationship between Local Authorities and DfES. The compact will not be a statutory requirement, and will be delivered within available resources.
10. On behalf of DfES and LGA, we commit to partnership working between central and local government focused on a shared vision and jointly agreed agenda.

CHARLES CLARKE
Secretary of State for Education
and Skills

23 July 2003

SIR JEREMY BEECHAM
Chair of the Local Government
Association

Extract from OfSTED, 2001b, *The Framework for Inspection of LEAs*, pp.27-28

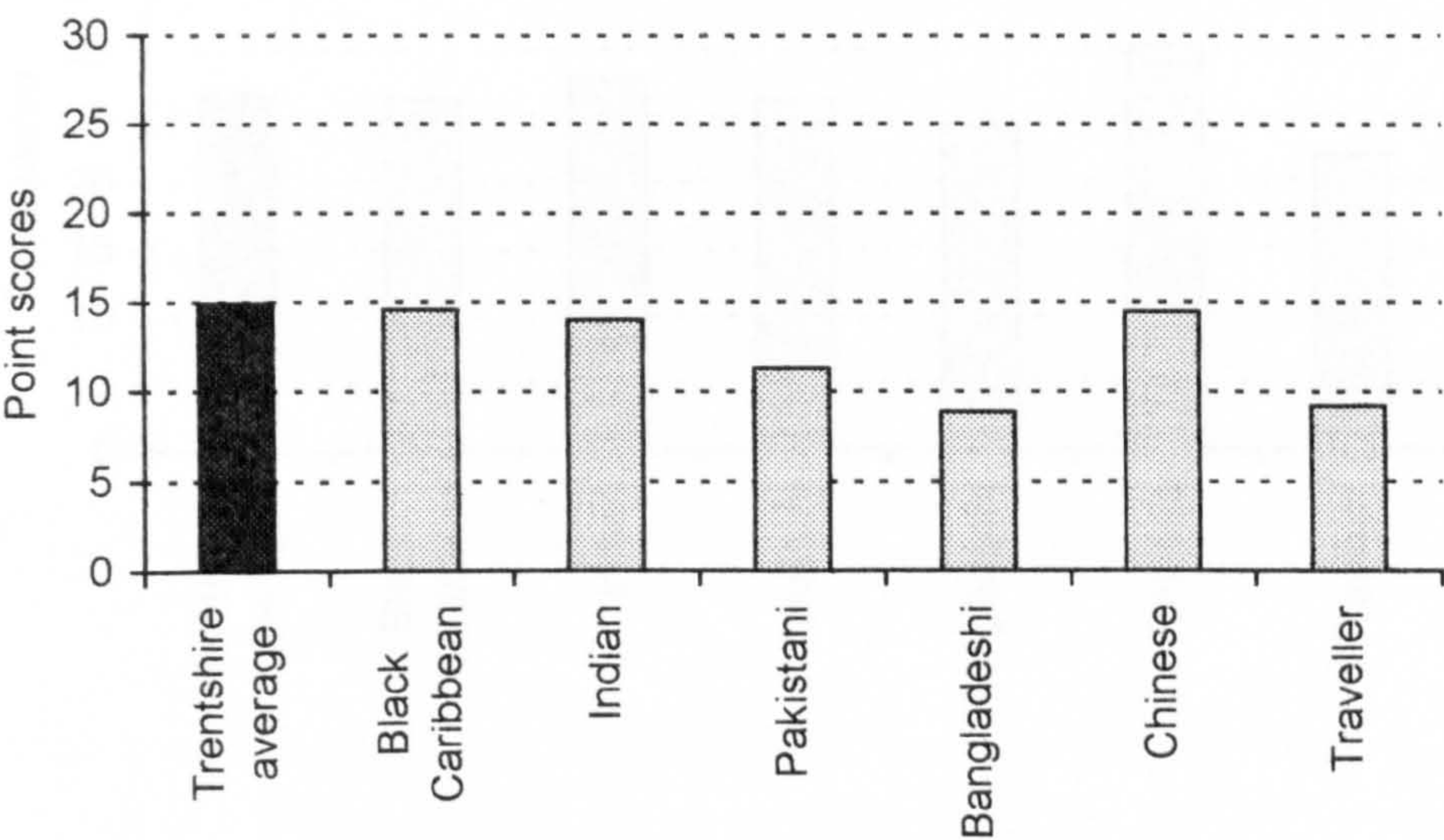
A Grade 2 (good) LEA is expected to	A Grade 4 (satisfactory) LEA will have	A Grade 6 (poor) LEA will have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have clear policies on equal opportunities, combating racial harassment and bilingualism, and the policies are actively monitored • monitor the attainment and attendance of minority ethnic children, including Travellers, has a clear view of the extent and reasons for any underachievement, and takes quick and effective action. • delegate grant funding under the ethnic minorities achievement grant (EMTAG) to schools according to criteria which identify needs. Progress on schools' action plans and the use of the grant is rigorously and effectively monitored. • use the Local Government CRE Standards "Racial Equality Means Quality" effectively to evaluate its own performance and to promote the use of the CRE's school standards "Learning for All". • provide very good leadership to schools by drafting and circulating clear policies and procedures for tackling all forms of racism • have formally accepted the recommendations of the Macpherson Report and to be implementing an action plan which responds to the recommendations of the report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • devised policies on equal opportunities, racial harassment and bilingualism which raise awareness, but are not supported by effective monitoring or strategies for implementation. • analysed data on the attainment and attendance of minority ethnic, including Traveller, pupils, but did take appropriate action when there is evidence of under-achievement. • met the administrative requirements for the minority ethnic achievement grants, though the criteria for deployment of the grant and related resources could be clearer, particularly to schools • made a start on using the CRE local government standards and promotes the use of school standards • provides some training for mainstream teachers on meeting the needs of minority ethnic pupils • devised policies and procedures that help to raise awareness of combating racism • accepted the recommendations of the Macpherson Report and formulated an action plan, but shown no systematic progress in implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a lack of clear strategy for improvement of attainment of ethnic minority pupils, and low expectations. • made no effective use of the monitoring data that exists to identify and target resources • complied with the basic requirements that must be met to receive the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, but show considerable variation in the extent to which schools are devising appropriate strategies to raise attainment of minority ethnic pupils, including Travellers, and not given their schools guidance on how to formulate an action plan or to monitor the use of the grant. • a basic awareness of the CRE local government and school standards • no training programmes for mainstream teachers on meeting the needs of minority ethnic pupils • given measures to combat racism an insufficiently high priority, with policies which are not consistently or rigorously implemented and no clear strategy on how to proceed • an awareness of the Macpherson Report, without formally addressing the recommendations

Extract from OfSTED, 2001b, *The Framework for Inspection of LEAs*, pp.27-28

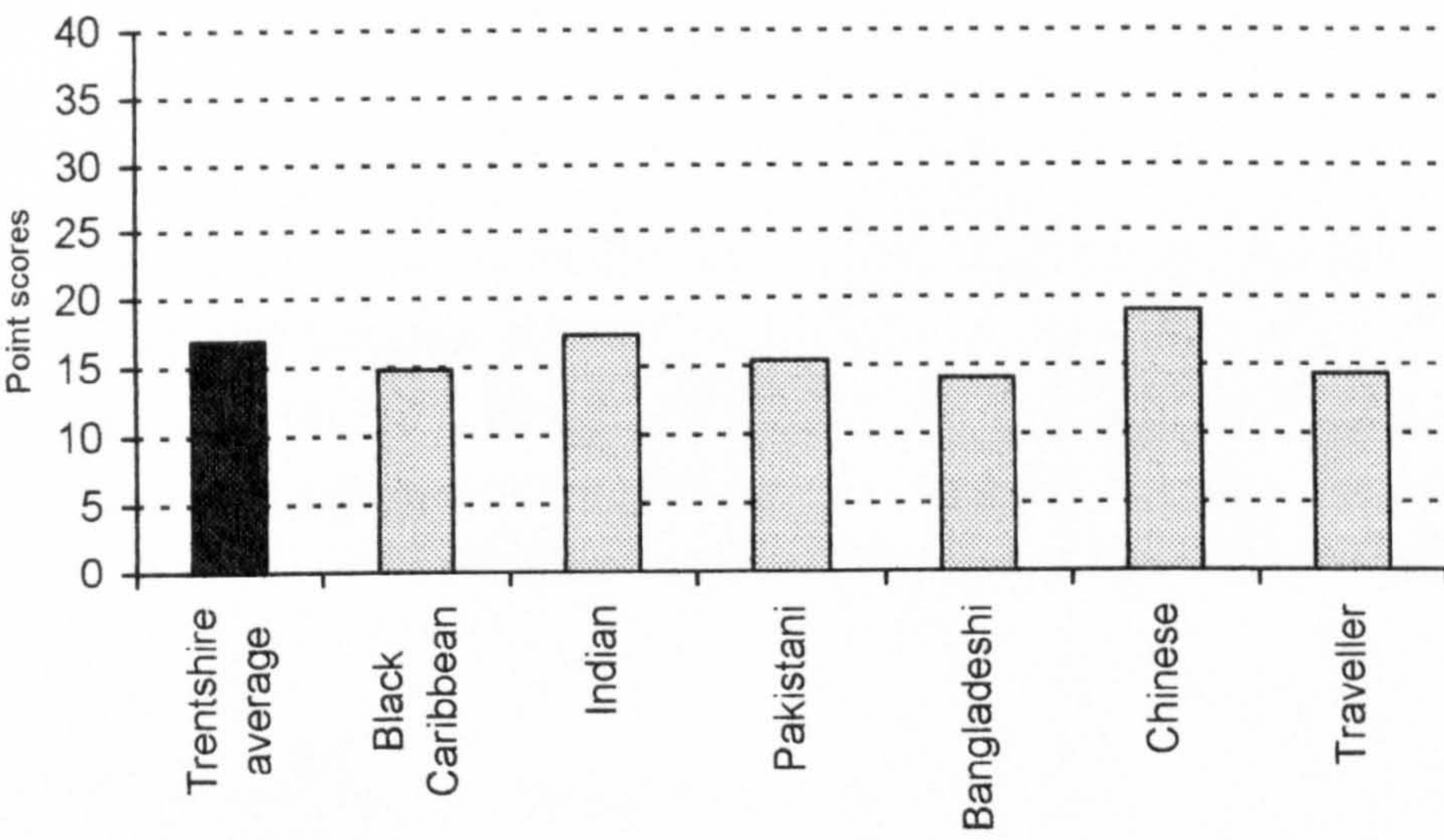
A Grade 2 (good) LEA is expected to	A Grade 4 (satisfactory) LEA will have	A Grade 6 (poor) LEA will have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• have devised clear equality targets and to take positive steps to ensure that the workforce and governing bodies reflect a multi-ethnic society, and to have well-developed strategies, including positive action, to ensure that staff from minority ethnic groups can play an active role in the education service.• provide training programmes for staff and for teachers on appropriate behaviour and ways of challenging and tackling racist incidents conduct.• have well-developed procedures for monitoring incidents of racial harassment in the workplace and in schools and takes firm action to implement those procedures.• have good links between other services and departments and a well co-ordinated strategy against racism.• monitor achievement regularly, to identify areas that need improvement and have a clear view of the progress which is being made with particular groups of pupils.• have a good strategic overview of the effectiveness of policies and support services for behaviour, attendance, education otherwise than at school, children in public care and minority ethnic groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• set equality targets and used limited positive action to ensure more representative workforce and governing bodies• offered basic training programmes on combating racism• a racial harassment policy and procedures, but does not monitor incidents effectively• patchy links with other agencies working against racism• developed useful projects to promote social inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• no clear equality targets or positive action strategies to improve representation of ethnic minorities in the workforce and governing bodies• poor training provision for staff• no monitoring of racial harassment• no links with other agencies to cover action against racism• too many children at risk of leaving school without any qualification, and no effective plans to improve this• no coherent strategy to promote social inclusion.

APPENDIX 8: Comparative performance in ‘Trentshire’ 1998 to 2001 by minority ethnic group

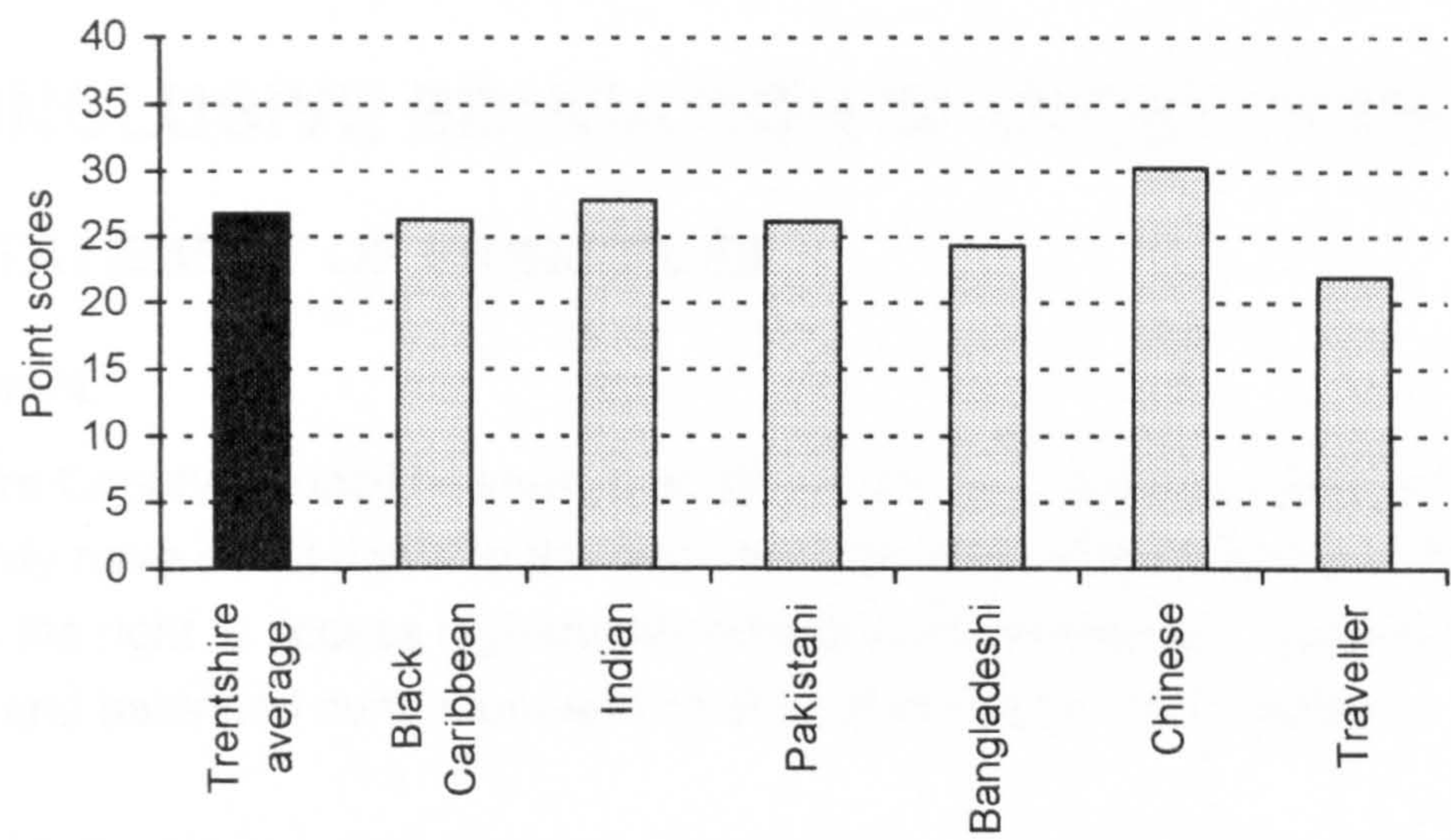
‘Trentshire’ Baseline Assessment: point scores 1998-2001



‘Trentshire’ KS1: point scores in Maths TEST 1998-2001



‘Trentshire’ KS2: point scores in Maths TEST 2000-2001¹¹



¹¹ Key Stage 2 scores by minority ethnic group are not available for the full four year period. See Chapter 14, Scenario B.

APPENDIX 9

Your Education Service
Trentshire

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN TRENTSHIRE

THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Entitlement

Trentshire County Council believes that all children and young people within our community have equal rights to the opportunities offered by education. This includes the right to access high-quality educational experience, to participate in a broad and balanced curriculum and be part of the social life of school.

For nearly all students, this common access will be through placement in a mainstream school. For a small number of students it may be that a mainstream school placement is not appropriate, or, at least, not for the whole of their school career. We expect there to be a continuing awareness of the student's entitlement to access mainstream educational experience. In all cases, the views of parents and their child will be taken into full consideration.

Valuing diversity

Human differences are normal and the rich contribution that difference and diversity makes to our schools is welcomed. To maximise this contribution, educational approaches must be adapted to the needs of the individual. In recognising and responding to the diverse needs of students, schools should use a range of flexible responses to meet such needs and accommodate their diversity.

Raising Achievement and School Improvement

We seek the participation of all students in learning which leads to the highest possible level of achievement and personal fulfilment. The development of inclusive practice will benefit all pupils and the staff working within schools. It is entirely compatible with high expectations and is supportive of academic success. Effective inclusive practice, of itself, will lead to school improvement.

OUR DEFINITION OF AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Inclusive practice arises from a philosophy which views diversity of strengths, abilities and needs as natural and desirable, bringing to any community the opportunity to respond in ways which lead to learning and growth for the whole community, and giving each and every member a valued role.

An inclusive school expects all students within its community to be educated alongside each other. It sees the diverse needs of students as a rich vein of opportunity to develop its approaches to teaching and learning and thereby achieve excellence for all learners.

The goal of inclusion is not erase differences, but to enable all students to flourish within an educational community that validates and values their individuality.

The school is the starting point for inclusive practice, providing appropriate learning opportunities for all children. Day-to-day practical support for students with diverse needs comes from a whole-school vision, commitment and planning which make “excellence for all” a reality.

Trentshire LEA will develop a strategy to enhance the confidence and expertise of all schools through its functions of professional support and challenge.

APPENDIX 10



‘TRENTSHIRE’ MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION SERVICE

Model Equal Opportunities Policy for Primary Schools

The following document has been produced by the ‘Trentshire’ Multicultural Education Service for the use of primary schools in ‘Trentshire’ wishing to develop their own policy for Equality of Opportunity. This paper serves as a guide only, and should be used as a starting point for schools to fashion their own policy statement and guidelines to suit the particular needs of the school.

Training and support for Equality issues in Education can be arranged through the ‘Trentshire’ Multicultural Education Service.

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Equality of Opportunity atPrimary School is based on the following core values. All pupils in the school are entitled to learning experiences which will enable them to achieve their potential and enrich their lives. The management and governors of the school are committed to ensuring high expectations of staff and pupils and providing a high quality learning environment. We place a high value on diversity in the school and treat every member of the school as an individual. In this respect we aim to meet the needs of all by taking into account differences of gender, ethnicity, cultural, social and religious backgrounds. The ethos of the school supports the development of self respect and self esteem in all pupils, staff and the community it serves. The school encourages pupils to become responsible and independent while preparing them for their role in a wider social context. This policy supports and reflects the objectives of the LEA document ‘Equality in Education’.

2.0 AIMS

We aim to put our values into practice by implementing the guidance outlined in this policy in all areas of school life. The principles expressed in this policy are reflected in all other school policies and underpin the ethos of the school. While all members of the school community have a part to play in the implementation of the policy, its impact on the life of the school will be reviewed regularly by the co-ordinator for Equal Opportunities.

3.0 THE CURRICULUM

It is recognised that the curriculum is a key factor in the development of children's' knowledge and attitudes. Each area of the curriculum is planned to incorporate the principles of equality while meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum.

3.1 Content

- 3.1.1** Curriculum co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring that the content of subjects taught is relevant and interesting for all children. The curriculum provides opportunities for children to explore different values and lifestyles, encouraging empathy and understanding. All subjects taught are presented from perspectives which include examples from other cultures and contexts encouraging pupils to question, investigate, and explore different approaches to life.
- 3.1.2** Curriculum planning takes into account the different needs of pupils and these are met by carefully differentiated tasks and activities. The cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of the pupils are reflected in the curriculum and resources. Access to all curriculum areas is ensured for all pupils by detailed and targeted planning.
- 3.1.3** Display plays an important role in conveying messages, therefore teachers ensure that all display reflects the multicultural, multilingual nature of our society. Displaying children's work is a valuable way of raising self esteem.
- 3.1.4** A variety of positive role models are presented to the children through the curriculum e.g. educational visits, outside speakers.
- 3.1.5** Extra curricular activities are provided which help children to expand their skills and knowledge and try out new things (e.g. girls only football club). Informal events are designed to include the whole school community.

4.0 Attainment and Achievement

4.1 Teaching and Learning Styles

- 4.1.1** All children are encouraged to become responsible for their own learning, while recognising the value of collaboration and co-operation. Pupils have the opportunity to direct their own learning within a structured framework e.g. children can choose when to complete certain tasks within a particular time of the day and are encouraged to make group decisions in many aspects of their work.

While teaching and learning styles vary according to the requirements of the task, all children have the opportunity to work with every member of the class at some point. Groups are carefully planned according to the desired outcome of the task. Children will work in a variety of different groups throughout their school life, thus preparing them to be flexible and

able to adapt to new situations. All pupils are encouraged to question, discuss, and collaborate in problem solving tasks, recognising concepts of fairness, detecting bias and challenging inequalities. Pupils appreciate the value of working together and develop respect for other people and different opinions.

- 4.1.2.** The value of “talk” is recognised and pupils for whom English is an Additional Language are encouraged to use their first language where appropriate. Teachers use language sensitively to encourage positive self esteem and inclusive behaviour.

5.0 Assessment and Monitoring

- 5.1.** All assessment in school informs future planning. Steps are taken to ensure that assessment is free of gender, cultural and social bias. Where possible First Language Assessment is used for developing bilingual pupils at Pre-stage 1 and Stage 1 of the English Language Stages. Appropriate support is available and used for end of Key Stage Assessments. All teacher marking is constructive and diagnostic. Baseline assessment is used appropriately for all pupils.

- 5.2** Pupils achievement is monitored by formal and informal procedures. Systems are in place to analyse achievement by gender, ethnicity and background. Any pattern of under achievement of a particular group of children is addressed through targeted curriculum planning and support. Small steps of progress are acknowledged where this represents significant attainment (e.g. for early stage learners of English). Children are encouraged to assess their own progress regularly in the classroom and have the opportunity of completing records of achievement on an annual basis.

Development in the areas of social, moral and cultural understanding is considered an important aspect of developing maturity, therefore progress in these areas are documented as well as academic achievements.

6.0 Resources

- 6.1** Resources used to support the curriculum are a powerful medium of instruction. Therefore all resources used in school are selected according to strict criteria to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and counter stereotyped views of the world.
- 6.2** The fiction books in school offer a variety of stories in which characters from minority groups have important roles. Books which use different dialects and accents are used where the use of dialect is appropriate and natural, not depicted as inferior. Stories and poems written by people from different backgrounds are welcomed. Dual text books are available in all Key Stages.

- 6.3 Resources are chosen to portray a balanced perspective of the world and challenge stereotyped views. Non fiction materials are factually up to date and accurate (especially maps and illustrations). These books give information about other societies showing effectiveness and achievements and do not define the developing world in terms of poverty.
- 6.4 Staff use the resource centres available to them to supplement materials in the school.
- 6.5 All resources are reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect the ethos and aims of the school.

7.0 Behaviour

- 7.1 The school promotes positive approaches to difference, fostering respect for people and property. Language or behaviour which is racist, sexist or potentially damaging to any minority group will not be tolerated.
- 7.2 The behaviour policy includes aspects of dealing with bullying, racial and sexual harassment. Pupils, teachers and parents are aware of procedures should such incidents arise. The procedure followed for racial harassment is in line with the 'Trentshire' Code of Practice for Racial Harassment. All incidents are recorded, and the 'victim' and 'perpetrator' are counselled. Parents of those involved are informed of all incidents and follow up procedures.
- 7.3 The school reviews patterns of racial incidents and exclusions to identify and respond to emerging problems and inequalities. Adults in school take care to lead through example, demonstrating high expectations of all children. Staff members are encouraged to explore their own views and attitudes to difference and monitor their own practice in relation to this policy.

Your may wish to refer to the Behaviour Support Service and the Education Child Protection Service for further information and support with regard to this area.

8.0 Management and staffing

Staff development includes regular training on attitudes and values, including cultural and religious differences.

- 8.1 There is an induction programme for all new staff which addresses equal opportunities issues and the cultural and ethnic diversity of the schools intake.

Staff training and handbooks outlining procedures for all staff, including non-teaching staff include Equal Opportunities issues.

All members of staff have access to INSET which will enable professional development. This is linked to the appraisal system.

8.2 The skills of all staff members are recognised and valued and staff are encouraged to share their knowledge.

8.3 All members of staff have a recognised role in the development of the school, which is reflected in the school development plan.

8.4 There is effective communication between management, governors and other staff members in all aspects of school life.

All members of staff and the governing body are entitled to contribute to decisions made which affect school life.

8.5 Staff provide a wide range of role models and reflect the community.

9.0 Parental and Community Involvement

9.1 Links with parents are maintained in a variety of ways. Where possible home visits are arranged to meet the family of children due to start school. Links are also maintained with the local playgroups and nurseries to ensure that children starting school feel comfortable and secure.

9.2 Information is conveyed to parents through a newsletter in appropriate languages. Where necessary assistance is sought from outside agencies to facilitate this process.

9.3 Parents are encouraged to participate in the education of their children by contributing to the teaching process, both at home and in school. Information evenings and workshops are organised to keep parents abreast of current educational practice. Consultation with parents takes place at least twice a year to discuss children's progress. Parents are always welcomed in school to attend or take part in assemblies, classroom activities or other events.

9.4 Parents are kept informed of school developments and have the opportunity to discuss any aspect of school life with members of staff.

9.5 Local organisations and communities play a significant role in the life of the school, offering links to the wider social context.

10. Monitoring and Review

10.1 All members of staff and the governing body have the responsibility of implementing this policy. The effectiveness of the policy will be evaluated on an annual basis by the Co-ordinator for Equal Opportunities.

APPENDIX 11:



MAKING EQUALITY A REALITY
Promoting inclusion and managing for diversity

A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR TRENTSHIRE SCHOOLS

Contents

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2.	A framework for developing an equality policy (including the school's Race Equality and Disability Policies)	p.7 - 8
3.	Model policy	p.9 - 20

MAKING EQUALITY A REALITY

Promoting inclusion and managing for diversity

A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR TRENTSHIRE SCHOOLS

1 Guidance Note

1.1. Introduction

Policies are the written commitment we give to making a reality of our aspirations and the way in which we hold ourselves accountable for what we say we will do.

This document provides guidance for schools on producing a policy, or series of policies, for promoting equality through:

- removing disparities
- fair treatment
- equality of access
- appreciation of difference and diversity
- promotion of the principles of inclusion
- elimination of discrimination
- differentiation

It covers race/ethnicity, disability and gender and relates to legislative requirements. Schools should note that they may either have single or separate policies as long as they meet the statutory requirements.

Inclusive principles should be part of all equality policies, in line with recent government and Trentshire guidance, and should be a driving force in all other school policies.

1.2. Legislative Background

This Trentshire guidance has been produced in the light of current national guidance and legislation.

Legislation includes:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976 as amended in 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the subsequent Code of Practice for Schools (2002)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- Curriculum 2000 which incorporates a statement on *Inclusion: providing effective learning opportunities for all children.*

Guidance includes:

- Codes of Practice from Equality Commissions - Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission
- SEN Code of Practice.
- Accessible Schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils DfES 2002
- Evaluating Educational Inclusion – OfSTED 2000
- Index for Inclusion CSIE 2000
- Inclusive Schooling DfES 2001
- CRE Standards: Learning for All 2000
- Removing the Barriers DfES 2001
- Statement of Inclusive Principles and the Audit Proforma for Inclusive Schooling March 2002.
- Equally Safe: CCC Reporting and Recording Racist Incidents 2001

All these documents draw on a firm commitment to the rights of the child in education and the responsibilities of educators to ensure that diversity, in all its forms, is embraced in a positive manner. In so doing, we ensure effective access to high quality learning environments for all children and young people.

The new OfSTED framework, which will be implemented in September 2003, places emphasis on the evaluation of educational and social inclusion in schools, including race equality. Schools will find this guidance useful in preparing for an inspection.

1.3. Race Equality & the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

The Act places a **general duty** on schools to:

- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good race relations
- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination

To help schools meet the general duty, they also have a number of **specific duties** which include:

- preparing a written race equality policy and keeping it up to date
- assessing the impact of its policies, including the race equality policy, on pupils, staff and parents of different racial groups, particularly the impact on pupils' attainment levels
- monitoring the impact of policies on pupils, staff and parents and on pupils' attainment levels

Schools may have a separate race equality policy or it may be part of a general equality policy, as long as the race equality sections are clearly identifiable. Schools wanting a stand-alone policy or wanting more guidance may use the Commission for Racial Equality's (CRE) framework for preparing a

policy. This is available on the CRE website at www.cre.gov.uk and as an appendix in its *Guide for Schools on the Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality*.

The model policy attached in Section 3 will help schools meet the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act. However, it is vital for the policy's effectiveness that schools produce a document which is relevant to their context and which complements and reflects their own school improvement plan and other strategic plans.

Guidance on assessing and monitoring the impact of policies is covered in sections 1.6 & 1.7.

1.4. Disability Discrimination Legislation

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 amends the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. Combined with the SEN framework and the new planning duties for schools and LEAs, this legislation aims to improve educational choice and opportunity for disabled children and children with special educational needs and their parents.

From September 2002 it will be unlawful for bodies responsible for the provision of school education to discriminate against disabled pupils and prospective pupils in the provision of educational and associated services to schools, and in admissions and exclusions. In maintained schools the governing body is ultimately responsible for the duty not to discriminate. The two key duties involved in ensuring that schools do not discriminate against disabled pupils are:

- not to treat disabled pupils less favourably; and
- to take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage. This is known as the reasonable adjustments duty.

The school will also need to *take reasonable steps to find out whether prospective or existing pupils have a disability. This will include (i) creating an ethos and culture which is opening and welcoming so that parents and pupils feel comfortable about sharing information about the disability (ii) asking parents when they visit the school during the admissions process about the existence of a disability (iii) providing continuing opportunities to share information (e.g. when seeking permission to go on a school trip) (iv) monitoring levels of participation, achievement and behaviour that may indicate a disability that has not been identified and referring the matter to specialist agencies*

The duty to take reasonable steps refers primarily to the policies, procedures and practices of the school. In considering what reasonable steps the school might take, it can take account of:

- the need to maintain academic and other standards
- the financial resources available
- the practicality of taking particular steps
- the health and safety of the disabled pupil or others in the school
- the interests of other pupils who may be admitted to the school, including issues of disruption.

There is only one justification for failing to take reasonable steps. It must be a reason which is material to the circumstances of the case and be substantial. Further explanation of what a disability is and examples of how to avoid discrimination is provided in the enclosed extracts from the DDA (Part 4) Code of Practice for Schools (2002). However, it is important to a proper understanding of the school's duties that the Code of Practice is read as a whole.

The disability duties in Part 4 of the DDA, which covers the education provided by schools, are designed to dovetail with existing duties under the SEN framework. A comprehensive overview of who is covered, who is responsible and what activities are covered, is to be found on the Disability Rights Commission website at www.drc-gb.org

1.5. Assessing the impact of policies

When reviewing school policies on, for example, curriculum, assessment, special needs, behaviour and discipline, partnership with parents/carers and the community, it would be useful to cross-reference with the LEA's inclusion documents, Codes of Practice and statements in the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)'s race equality standards, *Learning for All*. This latter document provides schools with a set of criteria which can be used as part of schools' self-review processes to assess how effectively they are addressing race equality issues and promoting diversity. The standards are also a useful tool for action planning.

To assess the impact of policies on the school community as a whole, schools will need to know the pattern of special needs in its population, the distribution and description of disability, and the ethnic background of all its pupils and staff. Schools should gather information on the effects of its policies on different groups and use this to assess whether the school's policies are affecting some groups differently. If this is happening, a school should consider how they could address these differences and should use the information to inform their planning.

The Governing Body should receive regular reports from the Headteacher and governor responsible for equality to enable them to fulfil their strategic planning and monitoring role.

1.6. Monitoring the impact of policies

The Race Relations Amendment Act requires schools to monitoring the impact of their race equality policy on pupils' attainment. **To do this, schools need to collect and analyse information about pupils' performance and progress by ethnic groups, and use it to analyse trends.**

Schools should also monitor other areas of school life that affect pupil attainment, such as:

- exclusion

- racism, racial harassment and bullying
- curriculum differentiation, teaching and learning
- rewards and sanctions
- pastoral care
- parental and community involvement
- admissions and attendance

Monitoring data will help a school to highlight any differences between groups of pupils, explore explanations for these and take action to address any inequalities. Useful monitoring strategies may include satisfaction surveys, one-to-one interviews and class and school council discussions.

Actions should be reflected in relevant strategic plans.

While the specific duties of the Race Relations Amendment Act outline the need to monitor by racial group, it is also important to be aware of the cultural background of the school population, including religion, as this is an important factor in the identity of many pupils, parents and staff and therefore should be acknowledged. Schools are well used to recording and monitoring the progress of individuals by gender and by special educational need. Schools should also monitor the progress of pupils with disabilities.

MAKING EQUALITY A REALITY

Promoting inclusion and managing for diversity

2 A framework for developing policy

A school may wish to follow these steps when formulating or reviewing their policy:

2.1 *Preparing a policy*

- Identify a member of staff who will lead the development of this policy, its implementation and monitoring. Managing Equality as a whole school issue is a complex development task which requires senior management support.
- Convene a working group to support this whole school development. Ideally this should include representation from all staff, a governor, parent and community representatives. It is important to consider how pupils might be involved in the process.
- Audit current school procedures and practices to ensure equality of opportunity and access to school provision and the promotion of good race relations between different racial groups. Inclusion and equality, including race equality, should be underpinning principles of any school self-review process. Where inequalities are identified, these should be addressed through school development planning.
- Identify any other policies which might be incorporated into a single equality and diversity policy, e.g. inclusion policy, multicultural policy, anti-racist policy.
- Identify monitoring and evaluation processes and decide the review cycle for this policy.
- Draft the policy and consult with the whole school community, including staff, pupils, parents, governors and community members. Ensure policy development is ongoing, involving discussion and revision where necessary and taking account of new legislation.
- When the policy is finally agreed and approved by the Governing Body, ensure that it is promoted. Use appropriate methods to disseminate it to all sections of the school community.
- If the school has a single policy covering all areas of equality, check that it fulfils the legal requirements of the separate strands.

2.2 Implementing the policy

- Produce an action plan, as part of the school improvement plan or, if it is a separate plan, make sure it is cross-referenced with other strategic school plans.
- As part of the action plan, consider professional development implications for staff and governors arising from the policy. Ensure that all staff and governors receive appropriate training and support.
- Inclusion and equality, including race equality, should be key features of all school policies. Other policies may need to be reviewed in the light of this policy. Use cross-referencing to ensure clear links between this policy and other policies.
- Identify the mechanisms that will be used to monitor the policy and provide regular reports to the school's senior management team and governors.

2.3 Reviewing and assessing the impact of the policy

- Monitor the effect of the policy on all groups within the school community.
- Review and evaluate the policy for its effectiveness in eliminating discrimination, promoting disabled access, equality and good relations between different racial groups.
- Ensure that any pattern of inequality found is used to inform planning and decision-making. Use the assessment findings to make changes that are needed to the policy and its targets.
- Decide what information will be shared, how and with whom about the review and evaluation of the policy.

MAKING EQUALITY A REALITY

Promoting inclusion and managing for diversity

3. A model policy for Trentshire schools

What do we include in the policy?

The italicised texts in boxes are suggested points for schools to develop. The standard text may be used as model statements within the policy.

What sort of school are we?

An introductory paragraph which outlines the school's context and its main features in terms of equality, inclusion and diversity. This might include:

- *geographical location & catchment area*
- *numbers*
- *ethnic composition of pupils and staff*
- *religious and linguistic diversity of pupils*
- *Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers*
- *gender balance*
- *disability issues*
- *socio-economic backgrounds of pupils*
- *attainment levels of different groups of pupils*
- *pupil mobility*

Statement of values and aims of the policy

Inclusion at *(name of school)* is about providing equality and excellence for all in order to promote the highest possible standards of achievement. It also ensures that we recognise and celebrate the differences that exist amongst us, that we treat all people fairly and that we strive to eliminate discrimination wherever it exists. This is a whole-school policy - equality applies to all members of the school community, pupils, staff, governors, parents and community members.

It is based on the following core values as expressed in this school's aims/mission statement.

In this section we would encourage schools to refer to their school's mission statement or aims to ensure that these are reflected in the school's Equality Policy. These should be included here. The following text may then be used:

These aims are designed to ensure that the school meets the needs of all, taking account of gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, disability, ability, sexual orientation, age, and social circumstances. We strive to include and engage all pupils and to prepare them for full participation in a diverse society. This school will take steps to:

- promote equality of opportunity and access
- promote racial equality and good race relations
- oppose all forms of prejudice and discrimination
- ensure pupils with a disability have access to the school buildings and to the curriculum

This policy is supported by an action plan or is reflected in the school improvement plan that outlines specific tasks which the school will undertake in order to achieve the aims set out in this policy document.

Promoting equality and managing for diversity

The following statements in Sections A – M cover a wide range of activities and relationships that go to making up the ‘ethos’ of an inclusive, anti-discriminatory school community.

Including them in a policy requires the school to ask itself, “What is the evidence that makes this statement true?”

Schools may feel that the details included in the following sections would be best included in the relevant policies rather than in their Equality Policy

a) Leadership and Management

The governing body and school management aim to create a clear ethos which:

- reflects our commitment to equality for all members of the school community
- promotes positive approaches to valuing and respecting diversity.

The reviewing and drafting of all policies includes current local and national guidance on equality and inclusion and all staff contribute to the development and review of policy documents. Governors are involved and take steps to encourage the contributions of parents and pupils.

We will monitor teaching and curriculum developments to ensure high expectations of all pupils and appropriate breadth of content in relation to the school and the wider community.

Additional grants and resources (such as those provided for minority ethnic and Traveller pupils, Schools Access Initiative, etc.) are appropriately targeted and monitored.

The policy and action plan will be available for staff, governors, pupils, parents and the school community.

b) Staffing - employment and training

The school adheres to recruitment and selection procedures which are fair, equal and in line with statutory duties and Trentshire County Council guidelines.

We will take steps to encourage people from under represented groups to apply for positions at all levels in the school and ensure recruitment and selection processes are monitored.

Equality and diversity issues are reflected in our school's employment practices

Everyone associated with the school is informed of the contents of this policy. All staff and visitors must support the ethos of the school, promoting equality and challenging bias and stereotyping wherever observe it.

We will ensure that staff training continually highlights equality issues. Equality is incorporated in the induction programme for new staff.

The skills of all staff, including non-teaching and part-time staff are recognised and valued. All staff are given status and support and are encouraged to share their knowledge.

Staff handbooks and regular professional development activities are available for all staff members to support their practice in relation to this policy.

Staff and visitors provide a wide range of role models and the school strives to reflect the diversity of the local and wider community.

c) Curriculum

This school provides an appropriate curriculum for pupils of all backgrounds. We will monitor and evaluate its effectiveness through target setting and attainment analysis

All pupils participate in the mainstream curriculum of the school.

The curriculum builds on pupils' starting points and is differentiated appropriately to ensure the inclusion of:

- boys and girls
- pupils learning English as an additional language
- pupils from minority ethnic groups
- pupils who are gifted and talented
- pupils with special educational needs
- pupils with a disability
- pupils who are in public care
- pupils who are at risk of disaffection and exclusion

Each area of the curriculum is planned to incorporate the principles of equality and to promote positive attitudes to diversity. All subjects contribute to the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of all pupils.

The content of the curriculum reflects and values diversity. It encourages pupils to explore bias and to challenge prejudice and stereotypes.

Extra curricular activities and special events e.g. school productions, cater for the interests and capabilities of all pupils and take account of parental preferences related to religion and culture.

d) Teaching and Learning

All staff ensure the classroom is an inclusive environment in which pupils feel all contributions are valued. Positive steps are taken to include pupils who may otherwise be marginalized.

We take account of pupil's experiences and starting points and are responsive to pupils' different learning styles. All pupils are regularly consulted about their learning.

Pupil grouping is planned and varied to reflect the requirements of learners and their social development needs. Allocations to teaching groups will be kept under continual review and analysed by ethnicity, gender and background.

Our teaching styles include collaborative learning. All pupils will be encouraged to question, discuss and collaborate in problem solving tasks. Pupils will be encouraged to be a resource for their peers.

Staff encourage pupils to become independent and assist them in taking responsibility for the management of their own learning and behaviour.

Staff challenge stereotypes and foster pupils' critical awareness and concepts of fairness, enabling them to detect bias and challenge inequalities.

Resource and displays in our school reflect the experience and backgrounds of pupils, promote diversity and challenge stereotypes. They are reviewed regularly to ensure that they reflect the inclusive ethos of the school, e.g. the inclusion of images relating to minority ethnic, Gypsy and Traveller children; displays to be positioned at eye level, etc.

e) Assessment, Pupil Achievement and Progress

This school expects the highest possible standards. Staff have high expectations of all pupils and continually challenge them to reach higher standards.

The school recognises and values all forms of achievement. We will monitor pupil performance and staff will use a range of methods and strategies to assess pupil progress. Assessments are analysed for gender, cultural and social bias, and take account of access issues, e.g. print size.

We will analyse pupil performance by ethnicity, gender, disability and special educational need and social background. Any disparities which are identified will be addressed through targeted curriculum planning, teaching and support.

This school believes that self-assessment is a teaching-learning strategy, and we will provide all pupils with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning through regular reflection and feedback on their progress. Pupils are consulted on issues relating to life at school, for example their progress, appropriate to their developmental level.

f) School Ethos

This school opposes all forms of racism, prejudice and discrimination.

We actively promote good personal and community relations and recognise diversity as having a positive role to play within the school.

All staff are expected to foster a positive atmosphere of mutual respect and trust among pupils from all ethnic groups and range of abilities.

Clear procedures are in place so that all forms of bullying and harassment, including racism, harassment related to disability, sexism and homophobia, are dealt with

promptly, firmly and consistently and are in line with relevant Trentshire LEA policies and guidance such as those for anti-bullying and dealing with racist incidents. All forms of harassment are recorded, monitored and dealt with in line with relevant school policies.

All staff are trained to deal effectively with bullying, racist incidents, racial harassment and prejudice and are offered support in handling such matters

We encourage staff to explore their own views and attitudes to difference and to monitor their practice in relation to this policy. Adults in school take care to lead through example, demonstrating high expectations of all pupils.

g) Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusion

This school expects high standards of behaviour from all pupils, appropriate for their developmental level.

There are strategies to reintegrate long-term non-attenders and excluded pupils which address the needs of all pupils.

We have procedures for disciplining pupils and managing behaviour that are fair and applied equally to all. All staff are expected to operate consistent systems of rewards and discipline

It is recognised that cultural background and disability may affect behaviour. Our school takes this into account when dealing with incidents of unacceptable behaviour.

We monitor exclusions by gender, ethnicity, special educational need and background is also considered. Action is taken in order to address any disparities between different groups of pupils.

This school will take all reasonable steps to prevent the exclusion of a pupil for a reason related to any disability they may have.

Pupils, staff and parents are aware of policies and procedures for dealing with harassment. They know that any language or behaviour, which is racist, sexist, homophobic or potentially damaging to any minority group, is always unacceptable.

Information and advice on attendance and exclusion is made available to parents/carers in accessible formats such as relevant community languages. And large print

h) Personal Development and Pastoral Care

Our pastoral support takes account of religious, cultural and ethnic differences, special educational needs, disability and the experiences and needs of Traveller pupils, refugees and asylum seekers' children

The school provides appropriate support for pupils learning English as an additional language and pupils are encouraged to use their home and community languages to enhance their learning

We expect work experience providers to demonstrate their commitment to equality, including race equality.

Victims of harassment and bullying, are given appropriate support using external agencies where appropriate. The perpetrators are dealt with in line with school policy and are provided with relevant support to consider and modify their behaviour.

i) Admissions

Steps are taken to ensure the school's admission process is fair and equitable to all pupils, including short-stay Traveller and Refugee pupils and those with English as an additional language.

This school will not discriminate against a disabled pupil in the arrangements it makes for determining admission.

We will admit pupils with already identified special educational needs. Pupils with statements of special educational needs will always be admitted unless, through the statutory assessment process, it is demonstrated that the pupil's inclusion would be incompatible with the efficient education of other children.

Comprehensive information about pupils' ethnicity, first language, religion, physical needs, diet etc. is included in admissions forms OR gathered at admissions interview.

j) Attendance

Families are aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to pupil attendance and absence is always followed up in a way that takes account of cultural issues or matters relating to a child's disability.

We make provision for leave of absence for religious observance, for staff as well as pupils.

We monitor attendance by gender, ethnicity and special educational need. Background is also considered. Action is taken in order to address any disparities between different groups of pupils.

The school will fully support children with long-term medical needs who may have an erratic attendance because they are in and out of hospital.

We expect full-time attendance of Traveller and Gypsy pupils.

k) Partnership with Parents and the Community

We monitor parental involvement and have strategies to raise participation of under represented groups of parents and sections of the community
Information and meetings for parents are made accessible for all

Progress reports to parents/carers are clearly written and free from jargon to encourage parents to participate in their child's education. Where necessary information is available in languages and formats other than English. Parents with a disability or with learning difficulties will be able to access school's information.

Parents are fully involved in the school-based response for their child with special educational needs, understand the purpose of any intervention or programme of action and are told about the parent partnership service when SEN is identified.

This school encourages participation of under represented groups in areas of employment . e.g.: through work experience placements

Informal events are designed to include the whole community and at times may target minority or marginalised groups.

This school works in partnership with parents and the community to address specific incidents and to develop positive attitudes to difference.

The school's premises and facilities are equally available and accessible for use by all groups within the community.

k) Responsibilities

All who work in the school have a responsibility for promoting equality and inclusion, and avoiding unfair discrimination.

Our governors are responsible for:

- making sure the school complies with the amended Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act
- making sure this policy and its procedures are followed

The headteacher is responsible for:

- making sure the policy is readily available and that the governors, staff, pupils and their parents/carers know about it
- making sure its procedures are followed
- producing regular information for staff and governors about the policy and how it is working, and providing training for them on the policy, if necessary
- making sure all staff know their responsibilities and receive training and support in carrying these out
- taking appropriate action in cases of harassment and discrimination

All our staff are responsible for:

- Dealing with racist incidents, and being able to recognise and tackle bias and stereotyping
- Promoting equality and good race relations and avoiding discrimination against anyone for reasons of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, gender or disability
- Keeping up to date with the law on discrimination and taking training and learning opportunities

Visitors and contractors are responsible for:

- Knowing and following our equality policy

Responsibility for overseeing equality practices in the school lies with a named member of staff and governor. Responsibilities include:

- Coordinating work on equality issues
- Dealing with reports of harassment

m) Monitoring and Review

This policy is supported by an action plan which is reviewed regularly. It is linked with the school improvement plan and includes targets for promoting inclusion and equality in the school.

This policy will be regularly monitored and reviewed by staff and governors to ensure that it does not disadvantage particular sections of the community.

Our member of staff responsible for equality will evaluate the effectiveness of the policy annually

The Headteacher will provide monitoring reports for review by the Governing Body. These will include: school population, key initiatives, progress against targets and future plans

4. The school's commitment to race equality

This section is designed to enable schools to meet the specific duties of the RRAA. For this section schools would need to refer to previous sections covering the description of the school (section 1) and its overall aims which reflect the school's commitment to race equality (section 2)

The school is fully committed to meeting its obligations under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and this is reflected in the policy statements above. To meet the specific duties of the RRAA 2000 we will:

- ensure that all pupils and staff are encouraged and able to achieve the best of which they are capable
 - respect and value differences between people
 - prepare pupils for life in a diverse society
 - make the school a place where everyone, taking account of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, feels welcomed and valued
 - promote good relations between different racial and cultural groups within the school and within the wider community
 - ensure that an inclusive ethos is established and maintained
 - acknowledge the existence of racism and taking steps to prevent it
 - oppose all forms of racism, racial prejudice and racial harassment
 - be proactive in tackling and eliminating unlawful discrimination
-

5. Disability, accessibility and inclusion

This section is based on the draft Disability Code of Practice for Schools issued on behalf of the government by the Disability Rights Commission. All schools will be expected to have in place an Accessibility Plan from April 2003.

Aim of the School's Policy and Accessibility Plan

The aim of our school is to ensure wherever possible that disabled people should have the same opportunities as non-disabled people in their access to education and prevent any form of unlawful discrimination on the grounds of disability.

Meeting Statutory Duties

The governing body will take appropriate measures to ensure it meets its statutory duties:

- not to treat disabled pupils and potential pupils less favourably than other non disabled pupils
- to take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage

These measures are detailed in this policy and the school's Accessibility Plan.

Staff Training

The governing body will take steps to ensure that employees and those working with the school's authority:

- support the governing body in meeting its duties
- do not act in such a way that renders the governing body liable to a claim of discrimination

The governing body will therefore ensure that all staff and those working with the authority of the school are aware of the basic requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Code of Practice for Schools. It will ensure that senior management of the school have a more detailed understanding of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Code of Practice for Schools.

Less Favourable Treatment and Reasonable Adjustments

There will be occasions where the treatment of disabled children is different from non-disabled students. In such cases the school will be able to demonstrate that such treatment is justified. The reason for the less favourable treatment will be both material to the circumstances of the particular case and substantial (e.g. health and safety reasons). The school will also demonstrate that it has taken all reasonable steps to avoid the disabled pupil being placed at a significant disadvantage.

Careful consideration will be given to how participation can be best facilitated. A number of factors may be part of this consideration including:

- the need to maintain academic, musical, sporting and other standards
- the financial resources available
- the cost of taking a particular step
- the extent it is practicable to take a particular step
- health and safety requirements
- the interest of other pupils

The consideration of these factors may lead to the adoption of certain reasonable adjustments rather than others.

Meeting the School's Anticipatory Duties

We recognise that the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students is anticipatory. To meet this duty we will review policies, practices and procedures to ensure that we do not discriminate against disabled pupils. Examples of the specific measures we will be taking include:

- ensuring providers of facilities for school trips and extra curricular activities can accommodate disabled pupils before making bookings in advance;
- reviewing staffing arrangements to ensure the school is in a position to administer medication if required
- ensuring there are special arrangements in place for disabled pupils who are taking examinations
- ensuring our policies and procedures for bullying cover issues of disability
- working closely with parents and disabled pupils to identify potential barriers to participation and devise reasonable adjustments to overcome them
- ensure that staff are trained and briefed on the Disability Code of Practice for schools issued by the Disability Rights Commission.

We will also take reasonable steps to find out whether prospective or existing pupils have a disability. This will include

(i) creating an ethos and culture which is opening and welcoming so that parents and pupils feel comfortable about sharing information about the disability

(ii) asking parents when they visit the school during the admissions process about the existence of a disability

(iii) providing continuing opportunities to share information (e.g. when seeking permission to go on a school trip)

(iv) monitoring levels of participation, achievement and behaviour that may indicate a disability that has not been identified and referring the matter to specialist agencies

Accessibility and inclusion

Suggested general statement to be included in the policy and annual report to parents with some bullet points that school may want to consider:

The success of our school will ultimately be judged by the extent to which it serves our community, and people with special educational needs and/or disabilities are an integral part of our community. We have produced an accessibility plan which shows how we propose to make our school buildings as accessible as possible, how we intend to improve access to a full, broad and balanced curriculum, and how we plan to make information normally provided by the school in writing, available to disabled pupils. The plan is attached to this report (*also included in the school report to parents*).

Our school believes that improving access to education and educational achievement by disabled pupils ensures equality of opportunity, encourages full participation in society, and improves the likelihood of independent living and economic self-sufficiency in the future. We believe that disabled people should be valued for what they can do rather than labelled for what they cannot.

- We will improve the accessibility of the physical environment within the resources available.
- Our school accessibility plan includes a training programme for staff on further differentiating the curriculum and disability awareness.

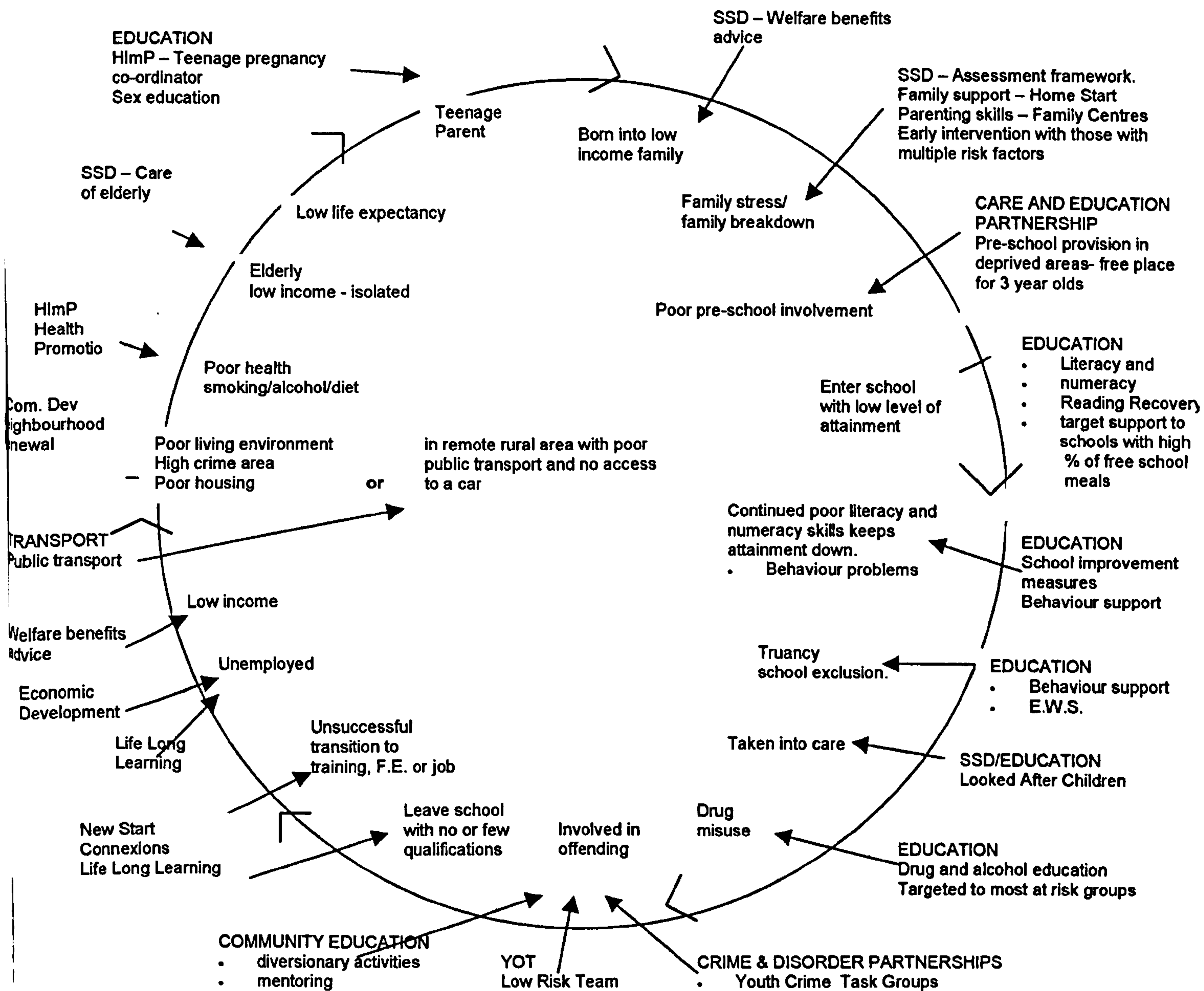
- All curriculum policies include a statement on inclusive practices that incorporate the 'Principles on Inclusion' in Curriculum 2000.
- Schemes of work, medium and short term planning include references to EO, SEN, EAL, and travellers (as appropriate).
- We identify and monitor the performance of different groups of pupils: boys/girls; minority ethnic groups; SEN; disabled pupils; travellers; Looked After pupils; EAL; chronic medical conditions.
- Assessment procedures take into account the SEN Code of Practice (2001) and its Toolkit; the needs of EAL pupils; the needs of minority ethnic pupils, including Travellers
- We have a policy/procedure for involving all parents/carers in their children's learning and monitoring this involvement and the outcomes.
- We have a policy/procedure for involving all pupils in their children's learning and monitoring this involvement and the outcomes
- Educational inclusion is an integral part of the school development programme, continuous professional development and (at least annual) governors meetings.
- We deploy resources to pupils with SEN in line with the expectations of the SEN Code of Practice 2001
- We have included (by April 2003) in our Accessibility Plan how we intend to make information normally provided in writing to pupils, available to disabled pupils.

APPENDIX 12

SOCIAL EXCLUSION – CYCLE OF DEPRIVATION

TRENTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICES WHICH CAN ASSIST IN REDUCING RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

(extract from the Chief Executive's Briefing Note on the Best Value Review of Social Inclusion, April 2001)



APPENDIX 13: The principles of educational research for social justice

From GRIFFITHS, M. (1998a) *Educational research for social justice: getting off the fence*, Buckingham, Open University Press, pages 95-97.

- 1. Improvement**
A main reason for doing the research is to get improvement in social justice in and from education.
- 2. Knowledge and learning**
A main reason for doing the research is to get knowledge and to learn from it.
- 3. Radical change of any of the beliefs and values is possible.**
Improvements and knowledge are always uncertain, so researchers must be prepared to change their minds radically, and to challenge others during and after doing the research.
- 4. Collaboration and consultation with the immediate research community**
Researchers need to work collaboratively with people as part of the community carrying out the research.
- 5. Openness to a wider community**
Researchers need to be open to the viewpoints of all concerned with the research.
- 6. Openness to political groupings and perspectives**
Researchers need to seek out and be open to the viewpoints of socio-political groups.
- 7. Reflexivity about own position and interests**
Reflexivity is needed about the researchers' own socio-political position and interests.
- 8. Reflexivity about own understanding and values**
Reflexivity is needed about the researchers' own understanding and values.
- 9. Perfection in research is not to be found**
There is no hope of doing perfect research. Utopia does not exist.
- 10. Taking responsibility as part of the wider educational research community**
Researchers must recognise their responsibilities related to being part of the community of educational researchers.